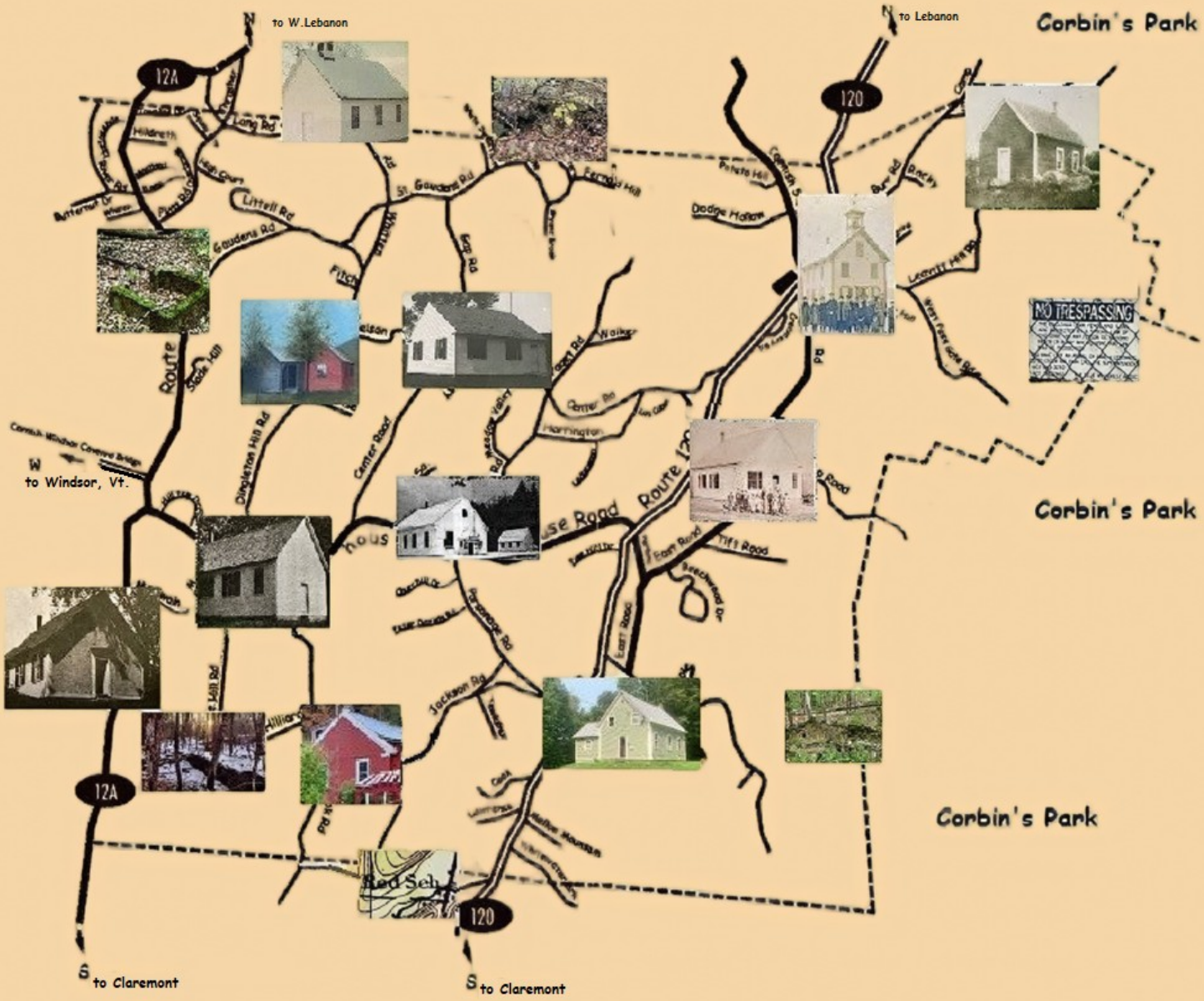
The Sixteen One-Room Schoolhouses of Cornish, New Hampshire



Mark S. Patkowski

2026

PREFACE

Selma Urbahn Lovejoy (1905-1987)

Selma Lovejoy, the grandmother of my childhood friend Robert Hier, came to Cornish, New Hampshire. from Brooklyn, New York about 100 years ago. More than half a century ago, she revealed to me that the stones and cement remains at the edge of my father's property in Cornish had once been a one-room schoolhouse, and that she had taught there. I was quite taken with this piece of information, but too young to follow through appropriately by immediately sitting her down and interviewing her. Now in my retirement, I am trying to make up for this lapse. Selma, this short book is dedicated to you!

This brief history of the Cornish one-room schoolhouses would not have been possible without the generous help of so many people.

First and foremost, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Ginny Gage, a neighbor down the road apiece. Without her cheerful assistance in reaching numerous residents of the town who had valuable knowledge of, or indeed first hand experience with, the one-room schools, I would never have gathered such a wealth of materials. We also walked the back roads and woods of the town together, searching for the remains of those schools that were no longer standing. We had quite some fun together on this mission. Ginny, this book is dedicated to you too!

In addition, I must thank the following people (in no particular order) for having taken the time (sometimes quite a bit of time) to help us in this endeavor: Fred Sullivan, Marilyn Quimby, Judy Rook, Leland Atwood, Heidi Jaarsma, Mary Decatur, Bill Caterino, Curt Wyman, Robert Hier, Jim and Sue Fitch - with sincere apologies to anyone I might have missed out. Thank you all!

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Background: The Settling of Cornish

Cornish was officially established on June 21, 1763 by Benning Wentworth, the royal governor of the Province of New Hampshire, who issued a charter for the six-mile square tract to 70 grantees, or proprietors. Initially, there were no permanent settlements in Cornish, and the proprietors held their annual meetings in Greenland, near Portsmouth. During this period, Judge Samuel Chase of Sutton, Massachusetts, made extensive purchases from said proprietors and, in the summer of 1765, Dudley Chase (his son), Daniel Putnam (his son-in-law), and Dyer Spaulding (a long-standing family friend and veteran of the French and Indian wars) paddled sixteen miles up the Connecticut River in a canoe from Fort No. 4 at Charlestown (which was then the northernmost settlement in New England). The three men "with their workmen" disembarked near the mouth of Blow-Me-Down Brook and proceeded to make the first permanent clearing in the Cornish forest (William H. Child, *History of Cornish,* 1911. Vol. 1, 13). Several weeks later, Dudley Chase's wife Alice and their seven children, who had all remained at Fort #4, joined them. Alice Chase later offered the following reminiscence: "The next day, all hands were called to build a cabin which served us the following winter, and in which… my enjoyments were more exquisite than at any other period in my life" (Child, Vol. 1, 16). On October 17, 1765, Alice gave birth to her eighth child (also named Alice), who thus became the first settler born in Cornish; six more were to follow in the ensuing years.

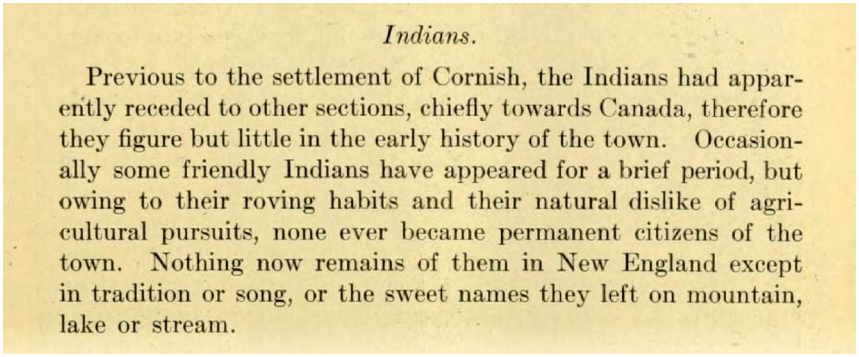
Presumably, Dudley Chase's family was the one Cornish family mentioned in Edwin Sanborn's *History of New Hampshire* (158) in the passage below:

From Charlestown to Haverhill, more than seventy miles, there was no road, only a bridle path, indicated by marked trees. This was often hedged up by fallen trees or made impassable by freshets. Mr. Mann, one of the first settlers of Orford, traveled over this path in 1765. "At Charlestown he purchased a bushel of oats for his horse and some bread and cheese for himself and wife and set forward, Mann on foot—wife, oats, bread and cheese and some clothing on horseback." Claremont then contained two families; Cornish, one; Plainfield, one; Lebanon, three; Hanover, one; and Lyme, three. Think of the loneliness, the privation, the hardships of these first occupants of the wilderness. No sounds broke the silence of the primitive forests but the howling of the winds, the crash of falling trees or the growl of beasts of prey. A rude cabin was their only shelter; game or fish, for a time, their principal food, and water from the spring their only beverage. The wife lived alone while the husband was abroad felling trees or securing food. Comfort was unknown. Consider, also, the royal condescension that inserted in the charters of these new towns such provisions as these: "As soon as there shall be fifty families resident and settled, they shall have the liberty of holding two fairs annually; also, a market may be opened and kept one or more days in each week as may be thought most advantageous to the inhabitants."

Other homesteaders soon followed, as part of the surge of settlement into the Upper Connecticut Valley that followed the end of the last of the French and Indian Wars (1754-1763). The population increased rapidly and, by 1767, the first Cornish census counted 133 inhabitants.

About the Original Inhabitants of the Upper Connecticut Valley

Child barely mentions the Native occupants of the area in his history of Cornish. A few references to the dangers posed by the Indians can be found scattered throughout the book, and only one full paragraph is given entirely to the topic of the first inhabitants (Vol. 1, 253):



Indians.

Previous to the settlement of Cornish, the Indians had apparently receded to other sections, chiefly towards Canada, therefore they figure but little in the early history of the town. Occasionally some friendly Indians have appeared for a brief period, but owing to their roving habits and their natural dislike of agricultural pursuits, none ever became permanent citizens of the town. Nothing now remains of them in New England except in tradition or song, or the sweet names they left on mountain, lake or stream.

Such "disappeared Indian" and "uninhabited primitive wilderness" narratives predominate in the older history books. To illustrate, a town history of nearby Norwich, Vermont, by Merritt Goddard and Henry Partridge (1905) states that, in 1761, "a wilderness country then just beginning to be known as the 'New Hampshire Grants'… was entirely uninhabited and… covered by primitive forests untouched by the hand of man… traversed only by a few roving bands of Canadian Indians" (9).

State histories make similar claims:

- "Not a vestige (of the original inhabitants) now remains… and ere long, every trace of the wild and noble Indian will be stricken from the face of the earth" (F. Eastman. *A History of Vermont*, 1828, 20).
- "The final withdrawal of the great majority of the Indians of New Hampshire to a new homeland in St. Francis near Montreal... (began) as early as 1676 after King Philip's War... (and was) completed after 1725 when the last of the Abnakis joined their confederated tribesmen in Canada" (J. Squires. *The Granite State of the United States*, 1956, 47-48).

It is now well established that Native populations had in fact occupied what became New England for about 12,000 years before the arrival of the Europeans (a time referred to as "Contact"). Shortly after Contact, these populations suffered catastrophic losses from a series of epidemics (smallpox, measles, influenza, diptheria, trichinosis, leptospirosis) beginning in 1535 and continuing through the mid 1700s, with the "Great Dying" of 1616-1619 standing out as particularly calamitous. Mortality rates ran as high as 95%.

The unrelenting pressure from European settlers and the resulting endless cycle of wars, from the Pequot War (1636-1638) to the last French and Indian War (1754-1763), further decimated Native populations, including the Abenaki people who had originally occupied an area encompassing Maine and sections of the Canadian Maritimes (Eastern Abenakis), and northern Massachusetts, all of Vermont and New Hampshire, and portions of southern Quebec (Western Abenakis). At the time of Contact, two Abenaki tribes inhabited the upper Connecticut Valley: the Sokoki (also known as Squakheags) whose territory stretched from just south of Mt. Ascutney down to Northfield, Massachusetts, and the Cowasucks (also known as Koasek) who inhabited the fertile intervales along the Connecticut River further north, the heart of their territory being located in the Newbury, Vt. to Haverill, N.H. area.

There are several significant Abenaki archaeological sites within a 50 mile radius of Cornish:

- The Hunter site is located in Claremont not far across the Cornish town line at the confluence of the Sugar River with the Connecticut River. Findings indicate the site was first occupied around A.D. 1300. “The Hunter site represents one of the most complete records available of Woodland occupation along the upper Connecticut River Valley. It has necessary criteria for designating it as a major village settlement just prior to the Contact period” (R. Duncan Matthewson, 30).

- The Skitchewag site is a short distance from the confluence of the Black River with the Connecticut River in Springfield Vt., across from Charlestown, N.H. Findings point to at least 6000 years of continuous habitation, including “a major village settlement” from approximately 1100 AD into the 1600s. “Corn, beans, and squash, referred to by Abenaki people as the ‘three sisters’ were among the botanical remains found associated with a … date of about A.D 1100” (R. Duncan Matthewson, 29). So much for Child's claim regarding the Indians' "natural dislike of agricultural pursuits."

- The petroglyphs at Bellows Falls, have been worn down by the river as well as by human action, and their age is difficult to determine. Nevertheless, a date of “perhaps as early as A.D. 1000” has been proposed. It is also thought that their purpose was to assist shamans in communicating with the spirit world. Just to the west of this site there is a major Indian burial ground (W. Haviland and M. Power, 1994, 197 and 211).

- The Swanzey Fish Dam, a V shaped stone structure in the Ashuelot River, a tributary of the Connecticut River, was built about 3800 years ago and used until the 17th century. The V points downstream, so that fish migrating upstream are forced towards the shore while fish migrating downstream get trapped at the narrow apex of the dam; either way, they can be efficiently netted or speared. Fire-altered cobbles with associated charcoal and stone tools were found in direct proximity to the dam, indicating that the catch was being processed on site (R. Goodby, S. Tremblay, and E. Bouras, 2014, 10 and 16-17).

- And about seventy five miles north of Cornish, the remains of several Paleoindian hunting and fishing camps along the Israel River in upper Coos county were identified from 1995 to 2010. The sites date from about 12,500 to 11,000 years ago (B. Coles, 2013).

The Western Abenaki population in the 17th century has been estimated at 12,000, including 3800 on the upper Connecticut River (Matthewson, 11). Estimates for the 18th century population are somewhat tentative: about 2000 Abenakis may have occupied the upper Connecticut around 1700 (W. Haviland and M. Power, 159), and 700 Cowasucks and Androscoggins (also an Abenaki tribe) may have "remained in relatively safe retreats in the forests between the American and British frontiers in 1774," but had mostly migrated to Odanak in Canada by 1800 (G. Day. 1981, 65). Frequent condemnations of the Native inhabitants as "savages" guilty of regularly committing murderous "depredations," can be found in the older texts, but occasionally there are more temperate descriptions of their presence:

- (1744) "When I approached the town of Charlestown, the first object that met my eyes was a party of Indians holding a war dance, a cask of rum which the inhabitants had suffered them to partake had raised their spirits… At this time Charlestown contained nine or ten families who lived in huts not far distant from each other. The Indians were numerous, and associated in a friendly manner with the whites. It was the most northerly settlement on Connecticut River, and the adjacent territory was terribly wild."
  (S. W. Johnson. Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson, 1814, 8)
- (1750) "Annually, in the months of May and June, very large numbers (of Indians) collected in the vicinity of the Great Falls (now Bellows Falls) for the purpose of catching shad and salmon, it being the best fishing ground to be found in all of New England… One hundred and thirty six years ago, in May or June, if a person with a good field glass had been perched on the highest point of Fall Mountain (now Mount Kilburn), a bird's eye view would have revealed to him, near where Cold River station now is, several scores of wigwams."
  (D. Hamilton Hurd, Ed. History of Cheshire and Sullivan Counties, New Hampshire, 1886, 408-409)
- (1750 and 1806) "In 1750 a small tribe of Indians near Litchfield, Connecticut removed to the mouth of the White River, Vermont, to find a peaceful home, and became farmers and mechanics. John, a son of Annawanski, their chief, often came on hunting expeditions to the upper Cohos and moved, in 1806, with his wife to Lancaster where he built his camp in Indian style, on Beaver Brook, near Israel's river. Of his thirteen children, eight married whites."
  (G. Merrill. History of Coos, New Hampshire, 1888, 363-364)
- (1761) Two men driving cattle in the summer of 1761 found clearings on both sides of the Connecticut River in the Haverill, N.H./Newbury Vt. area which provided plenty of fodder. "The Indians dwelt at this time on these meadows, east and west of the river, and were amicable… It was a fine country for them. It was easy of cultivation… The soil was rich. The river abounded in salmon, and the streams in trout, and the whole country was plentifully supplied with game, bear, deer, moose, and fowls."
  (G. Powers. Historical Sketches of the Discovery, Settlement and Progress of Events in the Coos Country, 1880, 37)
- (1765) "After the French war a number of families of Indians returned to the Coos, where they lived peaceably with the English for many years after the settlement" (924). During that time, "the settlers never interfered with the Indians in their administration of justice where it simply concerned themselves" (925). The settlers did, however, seek to convert them to Christianity: Samuel Sleeper, a Quaker and preacher, agreed "to make the first settlement among the Indians" (921) for this purpose.
  (A. M. Hemenway (ed.). The Vermont Historical Gazetteer, 1867-91, Vol. 2)
- (1796) "Known as Granny Stalbird, Deborah Vicker came (to Jefferson, N.H.) c. 1796… She became the region's 'doctress,' a traveling herbalist who learned native wisdom about plants and healing."
  (N.H. Historical Marker #229)

  "Her strong mind, energetic will, and remarkable physical endurance gave her immense influence among the Indians and settlers of a broad extent of territory."
  (G. D. Merrill, History of Coos County, New Hampshire, 1888, 408)
- (1812) "When (Mrs. Rebeckah Lovejoy) was fourteen her father moved to Dummer where… she took delight in watching the Indians who often came down the river in birch canoes on their way to market..."
  (G. D. Merrill, History of Coos County, New Hampshire, 1888, 856)
- (1815) The population of Gorham in 1815 consisted of eight households and "one family of Indians that lived in the pines near Moose River bridge, John Mitchell and wife and three children."
  (G. D. Merrill, History of Coos County, New Hampshire, 1888, 893-894)

Returning to Cornish itself, there are precious few remaining indications of Indian presence, apart from the aforementioned Hunter site across the town line in Claremont. Still, it does appear that two names attached to Cornish neighborhoods may be of Indian origin: Squag City, and Poppy Squash.

The Blow-Me-Down Brook runs through Squag City, which is an area in the northwestern corner of Cornish, at the intersection of Platt Road and Squag City Road, just below the town line with Plainfield. Charles Fletcher, in an article about Squag City in the Spring 2005 issue of SooNipi Magazine, wrote that “no one seems to know where the name originated.” On the other hand, the Town of Cornish website proposes that the name “is an adaptation of a native term that means ‘good fishing spot’” (Natural Resources Inventory, Cornish NH, 2013, 11). There is no mention of “Squag City” in two of the three published Cornish histories (those by William Child and by Barbara Eastman Rawson). However, the photograph displayed above does appear as "Freeman's Mills at Squag City" in the third, and most recent, history (Hugh Mason Wade, 1976, 85). No references were found in the yearly Cornish Town Reports (through 1955) either.

Nevertheless, the suggested Indian origin of the name does receive some tentative support as follows. In *Indian Place Names of New England* by Huden (1962, 241) the following entry appears: “Squog – Hillsboro County, N.H. Penacook, an abbreviation of Piscataquog, “at the river branch.” Squog is also currently the name of a Manchester NH neighborhood that is bordered by the Merrimack and Piscataquog Rivers. Its alternative spelling is Squag (e.g., on pages 49 and 69 of a 2009 city report entitled “Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy,” or on a vintage post card of the “Electric Light Plant on Squag River” in Goffstown, a town just outside of Manchester).

Margaret Wickens Pearce went "looking for Native People in New England's map history" by examining the use of native toponymy (place naming) in colonial Connecticut land deeds. One such deed described a property boundary as extending "to a place called Mamanasquag where is a Oak Tree Marked on ye North Side of the outlet of water that Comes out from a sort of grassy pond" (168). Clearly, the toponym "squag/squog" indicates the nearby presence of water.

Poppy Squash is Cornish’s second “Indian place name” candidate. Poppy Squash is referenced in both volumes of William Child’s History of Cornish (Vol. 1, 143 and 182; Vol. 2, 218, 250 and 428) and in multiple Cornish Town Reports. It is on the far eastern edge of the town, inside Corbin’s Park just past the Westgate entry point, on what used to be the Notch Road which traversed the Croydon mountains along the Notch Brook, emerging on the other side at Croydon Four Corners. This appears to be the same road that is labeled as the “Croydon Road” on the 1805 map reproduced in Child (Vol. 1, between pages 4 and 5). Poppy Squash is shown on Notch Road on a 1905 U.S. Geological Survey Map of the Blue Mountain Forest of Sullivan County, NH (Corbin’s Park’s official name), where it is spelled “Poppasquash.”

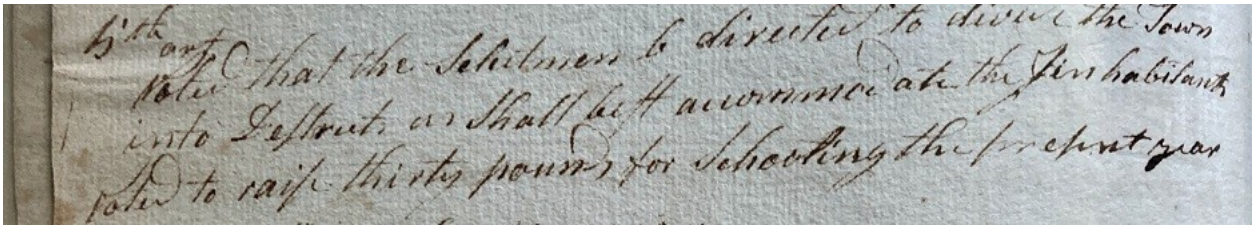
The 2013 Cornish Natural Resources report, referenced a few paragraphs back, states that Abenaki "overland travel was done on foot, following well worn paths that followed the (Connecticut) river and the streams from the highest elevations in the eastern part of Town to the lowest elevations along the river. Many of Cornish's current roads developed from these paths" (3). The Notch Road which, as already mentioned, ran along the Notch Brook, could well be one of those former well worn Native paths.

John Huden references a Poppasquash Island in Bristol County, R.I. and a second Poppasquash Island in Franklin County, Vt. (195). The latter is also mentioned in the Vermont Historical Gazetteer: "Off this shore there is a small island, a former gathering place of the Indians, and called by them Popasquash" (A. M. Hemenway. Vermont Historical Gazetteer, 1871, Vol. 2, 289). This island is currently an Audubon Society bird refuge off the northeastern shore of Lake Champlain near St. Albans.

While the information in this section is clearly limited, it does (hopefully) expand usefully on William Child's single paragraph on the topic of Native presence in Cornish and its surroundings, and on the lack of any such mention whatsoever in either Barbara Rawson or Hugh Wade. We now return to the history of the Cornish settlers and their schools.

Expansion and Contraction in the Cornish Population and Schools from the late 17th to the mid 20th Centuries

In 1785, with continued population growth (the 1786 census counted 605 residents), Cornish voted to create school districts, and to allocate 30 pounds for the purpose (the dollar would only make its official appearance seven years later with the passage of the Coinage Act of 1792).



5th art(icle)
Voted that the Selectmen be directed to divide the Town into Districts as Shall best accommodate the Inhabitants
Voted to raise thirty pounds for Schooling the present year
(from The Proceedings of the Cornish Town Meeting of March 8, 1785)

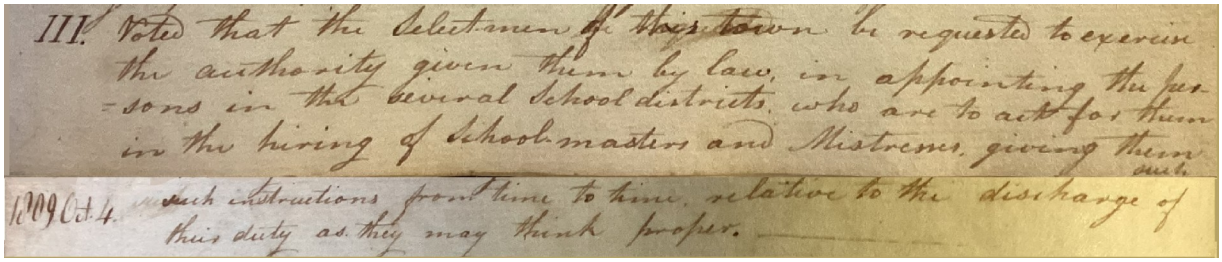
According to William Child, by the following year, "there were but two school districts in town" (Vol. 1, 142). Whatever education had been provided prior to this development most likely occurred in private houses, according to the Cornish histories of both Child and Hugh Wade:

"According to well authenticated tradition, the first schools of the town were assembled around the firesides and under the supervision of intelligent and painstaking parents" (Child, Vol. 1, 142).

"Early New Englanders had a profound respect for education, and much of it was accomplished in private homes equipped with good libraries before the state began to take a major role in education in the early nineteenth century" (Wade, 24).

Similarly, Everett Stackpole, in his History of New Hampshire, writes that in the eighteenth century schoolhouses "were rare at first, and a room in some farmhouse served the purpose as well" (Vol 2, 332). No specific illustration of this type of "private-house schooling" could be found for Cornish, but one from the neighboring town of Croydon was uncovered. Edmund Wheeler, in the Croydon chapter of H. D. Hamilton's *History of Cheshire and Sullivan Counties, New Hampshire*, related that "the wife of Moses Whipple, an intelligent lady, received the children of the first settlers at her house, and taught them free of charge" (159).

In 1809 Cornish required the selectmen to appoint the persons officially in charge of the school districts:


III. Voted that the Selectmen of this town be requested to exercise the authority given them by law, in appointing the persons in the several school districts, who are to act for them in the hiring of School-masters and Mistresses, giving them such instructions from time to time, relative to the discharge of their duty as they may think proper.
1809 Oct 4.

III. Voted that the Selectmen of this town be requested to exercise the authority given them by law in appointing the persons in the several school districts who are to act for them in hiring of Schoolmasters and Mistresses giving them such instructions from time to time relative to the discharge of their duty as they may think proper.
(from The Proceedings of the Cornish Town Meeting of Oct 4, 1809)

The population of Cornish peaked at 1726 in the 1840 census. By the middle of the decade, the number of school districts had reached its own peak of sixteen. In 1851 a proposal for a 17th district was voted down at the Town Meeting, and over the following years, the number of schoolhouses began to decline along with the town's population.

Student enrollment dropped to 165 by 1886, and then fluctuated within a 120-220 range all the way through 1955, when the new consolidated Cornish Elementary School at 274 Town House Road was opened. The year before, only six of the old schoolhouses with a total of 213 students had still been operating. The table below shows the changing numbers of Cornish residents, Cornish pupils, and operating schoolhouses from 1767 to 1955.

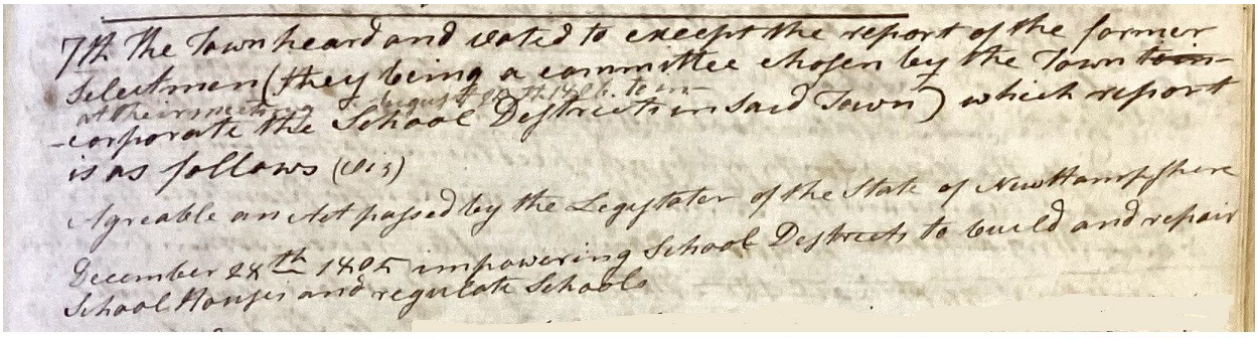
	Population	Schools	Pupils
1767	133	unknown	
1773	213	unknown	
1785		2	
1786	605		
1790	982	7	
1800	1268		
1807		11	
1810	1606		
1811		12	
1820	1701		
1828		13	
1840	1726		
1844		16	
1853			497
1860	1520		423
1880	1156		284
1900	962		178
1910		13	171
1930	855	11	180
1940	790	6	156
1950	989		191
1955		1	218

Child divided the history of New Hampshire public schools into three periods (143-146):

- First came a "voluntary period" which lasted from the late 1760s until 1827, during which the schools were established and supervised by the town (i.e., through the annual town meetings and the selectmen). "During this time there were but few and imperfect statutes." Hence, what was "preeminently a town system" developed "without the regulation and compulsory influence of law."
- A second period, from 1827 to 1885, followed during which the State mandated a "school district system" where "school districts became corporations with authority to choose their own officers, to own school lots, to build schoolhouses and to have general control of their schools. The towns were instructed to raise money for school purposes, and to choose a committee for supervision." It was during this period that Cornish's population reached its peak, as did the number of its schoolhouses.
- The third period, began in 1885, with the State-mandated dissolution "of the petty republics or districts of the town" and their fusion into a single district. In effect, there was a return to a version of the "town system," but one where "the control of all affairs, both prudential and educational, was vested in three well-selected individuals called a 'school board,' or 'board of education." The boards were to oversee the location and maintenance of the schools, the hiring and supervision of teachers, and the provision of transportation of pupils as necessary. The term "district" was replaced by that of "division," since the whole town was now one district.

Child's schema does provide a very useful lens for understanding the evolution of the one-room schools in New Hampshire, but with two caveats:

- The "voluntary" period was not truly voluntary. As discussed in the Appendix, school legislation in New Hampshire stretches all the way back to the 1647 "Old Satan Deluder" Massachusetts legislation mandating public education in towns with 50 or more households. These colonial laws were essentially maintained until the passage of the 1789 Act for the Better Regulation of Schools which specified what subjects were to be taught, and how much money the towns had to spend on education. As also discussed in the Appendix, it is not entirely clear how effectively these laws were enforced, or even to what extent the various town governments were aware of them. Thus the "voluntary" period might better be referred to as the "minimal state oversight" period, with the later periods characterized by increasing state supervision.
- The second period actually began in 1805, not 1827. As James Garvin stated, "Prior to 1805… local schools were directly managed by town government" (59), but laws passed in 1805, 1808, 1825, and 1827 ushered in the new "school district system." These laws are summarized in the Appendix. As it turned out, Cornish acted upon the 1805 Act swiftly, and created 11 school districts that covered the entire town in 1807:



The Town heard and voted to accept the report of the former Selectmen (they being a committee chosen by the Town at their meeting August (illegible) **to incorporate the School Districts in said Town) which report is as follows:**
Agreable on Act passed by the Legislature of the State of New Hampshire December 28th 1805 empowering School Districts to build and repair School Houses and regulate Schools.
(descriptions of the boundaries of the 11 School Districts follow) **(dated March 4, 1807)**

This map of Cornish is taken from the 1860 Topographical Map of the County of Sullivan, New Hampshire, by Henry Francis Walling (Harvard Historical Maps Collection). There are no earlier detailed maps of Cornish. The locations of fifteen of the schoolhouses in operation at the time are shown. The schoolhouse in Cornish Flat (No. 6) is (inexplicably) missing and has been added.

Child provides a very useful overview of the development of the school districts in Cornish:

> These had been numbered in the order of their need and organization. Numbers 1, 2 and 3 extended the entire length of the town, on the Connecticut River where settlements first took place. Numbers 4 and 5 on the hills east and north of the last, where hardy pioneers had decided to settle. No. 6 on an intervale in the northeast part of the town where a mountain stream spread, that invited manufacturers. Numbers 7, 8, 9 and 10 following the intervale south and southwest with the adjacent hillsides, reaching to the north line of Claremont. No. 11, west of these last, embracing the territory east of the river districts and No. 4.
>
> The whole town was now embraced within the eleven districts already organized. The five other districts were afterwards formed by the division of districts already established. This was done to better accommodate the children of settlers remote from school privileges. No. 12, formerly embraced in No. 6, was formed by those who settled farther up the mountain stream east of the Flat. It bore the unpoetical name of "Poppy Squash." No. 13 was formed in 1828 from the southern portion of districts 9 and 11, and bordered on the north line of Claremont. No. 14 embraced the southeast corner of the town, large in territory but sparse in population, except a portion of it called the "Hempyard." No. 15 was a small, sparsely settled district, lying east of No. 1, on "Root Hill," not conveniently accessible either to Nos. 1, 11, or 13, which lay contiguous. No. 16 embraced the northeast corner of the town. It formerly belonged mainly to Grantham and was annexed to Cornish in 1844. The district was thereafter called "Texas" (143-144).

In the following pages, each school is presented individually. Each description begins with a short paragraph taken from a two-page survey of the schools written in 1977 by Stephen P. Tracy (co-author of the Genealogical Section of Wade's *Brief History of Cornish*), from the Cornish Historical Society's collection. Additional information is primarily taken from the following sources:

- Annual Cornish Town Reports. The earliest Town Reports were handwritten (and quite difficult to decipher) and did not contain any formal School Reports. Since 1851, these documents have been printed. The 1852 edition is missing, and the 1853 edition contains the first formal "Report of the Superintending School Committee" by Alvah Spaulding (which will be explored in some detail). All subsequent editions contain school reports.
- Interviews with some of the last surviving former pupils of the last one-room schools before the 1955 switch to the central school. Most of these were filmed and are available online from the Cornish Historical Society (CHS). Ginny Gage and I conducted three additional interviews with Marilyn Quimby, Fred Sullivan, and Leland Atwood. The latter two had also been previously recorded by the Cornish Historical Society, as had several more informants: Stuart Hodgeman, Bernice Johnson and Helen Lovell, Calvin Monroe, Judy Rook, Steve Taylor, and Daisy Yatsevitch.
- A letter that was read out loud on the CHS "One Room Schoolhouses" video where it was attributed to "Sue Fitch's grandfather." However, further investigation strongly suggests that the letter was likely written by Dwight C. Wood, Stephen Tracy's co-author of the aforementioned Genealogical Section in the Wade volume. There is also a second letter by Robert Hier describing his grandmother's first experiences as a school teacher in Cornish in 1923. A variety of newspaper articles kept in the "Vertical Files On-Line" of the CHS were also drawn upon, as were the three Cornish histories (Child, Rawson, Wade). Some materials were obtained from the Town of Cornish website, from online scholarly sources such as the UNH Scholars Repository, the HathiTrust Digital Library, and the Internet Archive Digital Library, as well as other online library, museum, and government sources.

The goal in the pages that follow is not to give an exhaustive account of all of the information contained in these various sources, but rather to present a mix of selected items that might help capture some of the feel of the one-room school era in the history of the Town of Cornish.

Note: As already mentioned, the term "school *district*" was employed until 1886, and then replaced with the term "school *division*." In this report, SH# ("Schoolhouse No.") will frequently be used as a substitute for either.

Country School by Homer Winslow, 1871

The Sixteen One-Room Schoolhouses of Cornish

An examination of the 1853 school report by Alvah Spaulding, the first full such report on record, will provide a quite detailed general view of the overall state of schooling in Cornish in the middle of the 19th century. We begin with the statistical summary presented in a Table at the end of said report (12):

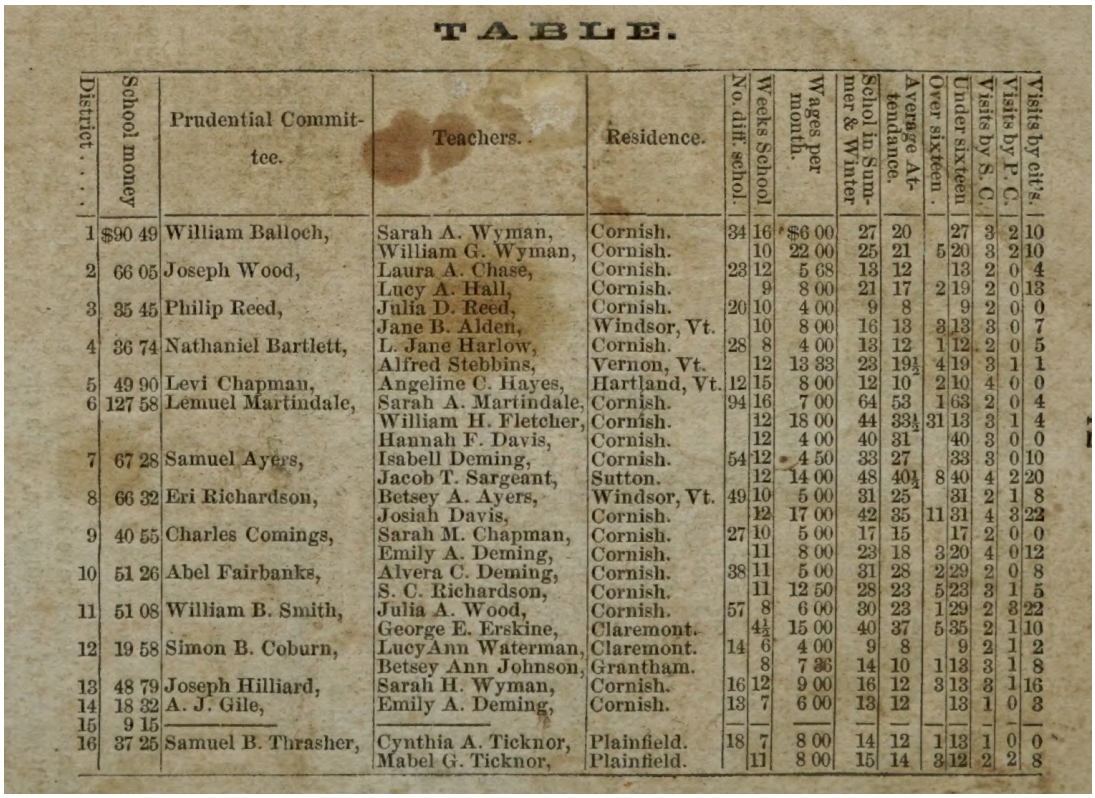


TABLE.

District . . .	School money	Prudential Committee.	Teachers.	Residence.	No. diff. schol.	Weeks School	Wages per month.	Schol in Summer & Winter	Average Attendance.	Over sixteen.	Under sixteen.	Visits by S. C.	Visits by P. C.	Visits by cit's.
1	$90 49	William Balloch,	Sarah A. Wyman,	Cornish.	34	16	$6 00	27	20		27	3	2	10
			William G. Wyman,	Cornish.		10	22 00	25	21	5	20	3	2	10
2	66 05	Joseph Wood,	Laura A. Chase,	Cornish.	23	12	5 68	13	12		13	2	0	4
			Lucy A. Hall,	Cornish.		9	8 00	21	17	2	19	2	0	13
3	35 45	Philip Reed,	Julia D. Reed,	Cornish.	20	10	4 00	9	8		9	2	0	0
			Jane B. Alden,	Windsor, Vt.		10	8 00	16	13	3	13	3	0	7
4	36 74	Nathaniel Bartlett,	L. Jane Harlow,	Cornish.	28	8	4 00	13	12	1	12	2	0	5
			Alfred Stebbins,	Vernon, Vt.		12	13 33	23	19½	4	19	3	1	1
5	49 90	Levi Chapman,	Angeline C. Hayes,	Hartland, Vt.	12	15	8 00	12	10	2	10	4	0	0
6	127 58	Lemuel Martindale,	Sarah A. Martindale,	Cornish.	94	16	7 00	64	53	1	63	2	0	4
			William H. Fletcher,	Cornish.		12	18 00	44	33½	31	13	3	1	4
			Hannah F. Davis,	Cornish.		12	4 00	40	31		40	3	0	0
7	67 28	Samuel Ayers,	Isabell Deming,	Cornish.	54	12	4 50	33	27		33	3	0	10
			Jacob T. Sargeant,	Sutton.		12	14 00	48	40½	8	40	4	2	20
8	66 32	Eri Richardson,	Betsey A. Ayers,	Windsor, Vt.	49	10	5 00	31	25		31	2	1	8
			Josiah Davis,	Cornish.		12	17 00	42	35	11	31	4	3	22
9	40 55	Charles Comings,	Sarah M. Chapman,	Cornish.	27	10	5 00	17	15		17	2	0	0
			Emily A. Deming,	Cornish.		11	8 00	23	18	3	20	4	0	12
10	51 26	Abel Fairbanks,	Alvera C. Deming,	Cornish.	38	11	5 00	31	28	2	29	2	0	8
			S. C. Richardson,	Cornish.		11	12 50	28	23	5	23	3	1	5
11	51 08	William B. Smith,	Julia A. Wood,	Cornish.	57	8	6 00	30	23	1	29	2	3	22
			George E. Erskine,	Claremont.		4½	15 00	40	37	5	35	2	1	10
12	19 58	Simon B. Coburn,	LucyAnn Waterman,	Claremont.	14	6	4 00	9	8		9	2	1	2
			Betsey Ann Johnson,	Grantham.		8	7 36	14	10	1	13	3	1	8
13	48 79	Joseph Hilliard,	Sarah H. Wyman,	Cornish.	16	12	9 00	16	12	3	13	3	1	16
14	18 32	A. J. Gile,	Emily A. Deming,	Cornish.	13	7	6 00	13	12		13	1	0	3
15	9 15													
16	37 25	Samuel B. Thrasher,	Cynthia A. Ticknor,	Plainfield.	18	7	8 00	14	12	1	13	1	0	0
			Mabel G. Ticknor,	Plainfield.		11	8 00	15	14	3	12	2	2	8

As can be seen, fifteen of the sixteen schools were run that year, SH#15 being the exception. As can also readily be seen, there was considerable disparity across the districts in terms of budgets, length of the school terms, teacher pay, and supervision:

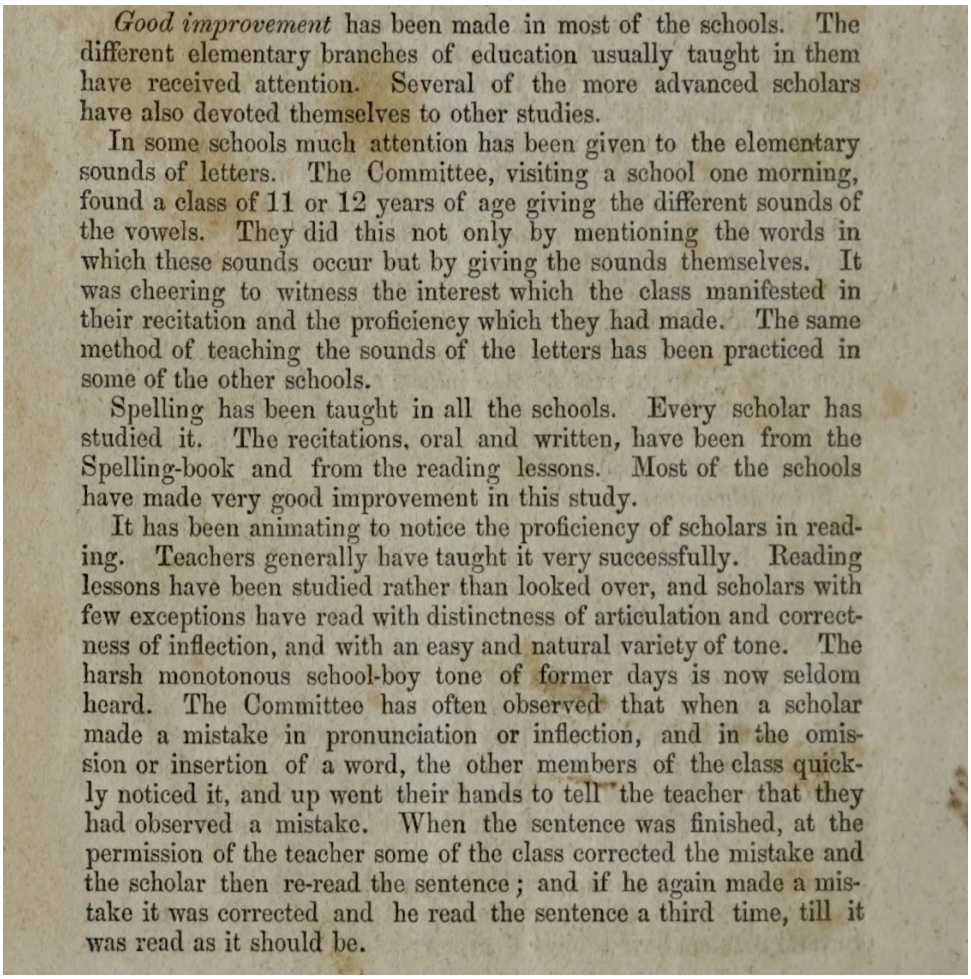
- Budgets ranged widely; for example, District 14 spent $18.32 on 13 scholars (or $1.41 each), while District 1 spent $90.49 on 34 scholars ($2.66 each).
- The length of school terms varied from 4 ½ to 16 weeks in different school districts and terms.
- Teacher monthly pay ranged from $4.00 to $22. *All* of the male teachers earned $13.33 or more, and *all* of the female teachers earned $12.50 or less. This is assuming that "S. C. Richardson" is Sarah Richardson, listed in Child's genealogy as born in 1815 and "a very successful teacher" (Vol. 2, 307). If S. C. was male, then the highest paid female teacher was Sarah H. Wyman at $9.00 per month. These inequities were quite deliberate. As Spaulding wrote, "(In the past) citizens have instructed their Prudential Committees to give not more than 50 cents per day to a male teacher, and to a female teacher, not more than 16 cents a day." Optimistically, he added, "Those years are past. We hope they will never return" (8).
- Visits by S. C. (Superintending School Committee – a committee of one, namely the Superintendent) seemed reasonably well distributed across the schools, while visits by P. C. (Prudential Committees, also committees of one, the person in charge of the district) were more haphazard, ranging from none in several districts to 3 in two districts. Citizen visits also varied widely across districts, from 0 to 22.

Were the Unequal School Wages in Cornish Unusual?

Chapter XIII of Stackpole's *History of New Hampshire Vol. 2* examined the schools in the 18th century, listing several of the state's earliest recorded teachers, from John Legat (Hampton, 1647) and Charles Buckner (Dover Neck, 1658) to Hercules Mooney (Durham, 1751) and Henry Parkinson (Concord, 1784). Every single one of them was male (331-334).

In chapter XIV of Stackpole's *History of New Hampshire Vol. 3,* which covers NH education in the 19th century, the author wrote: "It was learned after a time that refined and well educated ladies could keep order as well as male teachers, and sometimes better… A special reason (for employing them) was that the wages of female teachers were much smaller than those of men. The first recognition of school mistresses by law was in 1826. As late as 1847 reports show that male teachers were receiving an average wage of $13.50 per month, exclusive of board… while female teachers received only an average of $5.65 per month" (210).

Returning to the Spaulding report, its last two pages (preceding the Table) provide a description of the subjects taught in school:



Good improvement has been made in most of the schools. The different elementary branches of education usually taught in them have received attention. Several of the more advanced scholars have also devoted themselves to other studies.

In some schools much attention has been given to the elementary sounds of letters. The Committee, visiting a school one morning, found a class of 11 or 12 years of age giving the different sounds of the vowels. They did this not only by mentioning the words in which these sounds occur but by giving the sounds themselves. It was cheering to witness the interest which the class manifested in their recitation and the proficiency which they had made. The same method of teaching the sounds of the letters has been practiced in some of the other schools.

Spelling has been taught in all the schools. Every scholar has studied it. The recitations, oral and written, have been from the Spelling-book and from the reading lessons. Most of the schools have made very good improvement in this study.

It has been animating to notice the proficiency of scholars in reading. Teachers generally have taught it very successfully. Reading lessons have been studied rather than looked over, and scholars with few exceptions have read with distinctness of articulation and correctness of inflection, and with an easy and natural variety of tone. The harsh monotonous school-boy tone of former days is now seldom heard. The Committee has often observed that when a scholar made a mistake in pronunciation or inflection, and in the omission or insertion of a word, the other members of the class quickly noticed it, and up went their hands to tell the teacher that they had observed a mistake. When the sentence was finished, at the permission of the teacher some of the class corrected the mistake and the scholar then re-read the sentence; and if he again made a mistake it was corrected and he read the sentence a third time, till it was read as it should be.

The improvement made in penmanship has not equalled the improvement in other studies. Scholars appear to have taken great pains to improve their hand writing. Teachers, perhaps, have felt too little interest in this branch of common school education, or they have been deficient in their qualifications to teach it. The instruction given has been too slight and immethodical. It ought not to be so. Instruction in penmanship should be thorough and systematic as well as in other studies. Letters should be classified, and the principles upon which they are formed should be distinctly stated and illustrated by the teacher upon the blackboard. The proper position of the body, arms, hands and fingers should be correctly described. All the members of the class should have the same copy, and while they are writing the teacher should devote his time and attention to them. But instead of this, in some schools every member of the class may perhaps have a copy different from the copy of any other member. He proceeds without much definite instruction to form the letters like those of the copy, not by any principle or rule, but as well as he can by guess. If a scholar wishes to become a good penman he must seek instruction somewhere else than in the Common School. Hence arises the necessity for writing schools. This necessity should be avoided.

Arithmetic has been taught by most teachers not only as an art but as a science. The principles upon which the rules are framed, have been studied and understood by the greater portion of scholars, so far as they have advanced. It has been animating to see the promptness, with which propositions have been solved, the readiness with which the different steps taken in their solution have been definitely stated and correctly explained.

Scholars studying Geography have in most instances done well.—This is true particularly of those who have been favored with the use of Outline Maps. It is hoped that such maps will be introduced into all our schools.

Grammar classes have in most of the schools, devoted themselves to the study of our language, with earnestness and perseverance.—Teachers have manifested an interest in the analysis of sentences, and in tracing out the relation of words one to another. Scholars have sympathized with them in this interest. Writing of compositions has been practiced by several of the advanced Grammar classes. The effort and the improvement which they have made, is truly worthy of praise. It is hoped that all our Grammar classes will imitate their example.

Algebra, Philosophy, History, Astronomy, and Physiology, have been studied by several of the scholars in different schools. They acquitted themselves with great credit at their examination.

ALVAH SPAULDING,
Superintending School Committee.

What emerges is a clear “focus on the basics” approach, essentially the classic “three Rs.” The language arts are heavily emphasized. “The sounds of letters” (phonics?), spelling, reading, penmanship, grammar and composition, all rate a full paragraph (the longest paragraph being the one on penmanship, bemoaning its sorry state). Arithmetic also rates a full paragraph of its own.

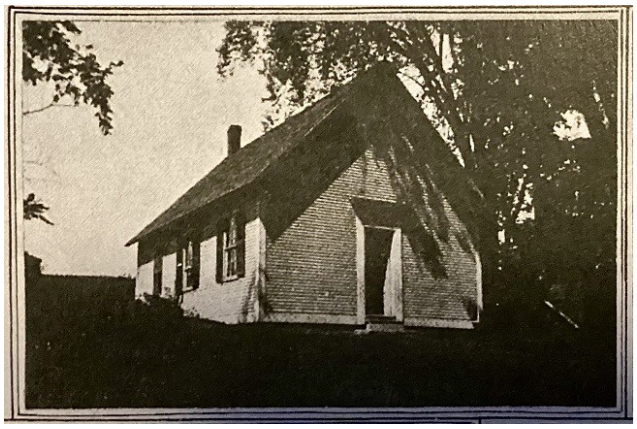
Geography is given three sentences. Algebra, philosophy, history, astronomy, and physiology, together, must make do with two sentences reassuring us that they “have been studied by several scholars in different schools.”

We now turn to individual examinations of the sixteen (seventeen?) one-room schoolhouses of Cornish.

Schoolhouse No. 1

a.k.a. Below the Bridge, Balloch's, River, Chadbourne - currently inhabited, 1048 Route 12A.

"This schoolhouse was located on the west side of what is now Route 12A, a bit south of the Salmon. P. Chase birthplace. It was later known as the Chadbourne School and continued to be used as a school until 1954 when the new central school was erected. It has been converted into a residence" (S. P. Tracy).



Undated photo

2025 photo

The first three schools were built on the west side of the town, alongside the Connecticut River where, as Child pointed out, the first settlements had taken place. In 1851 article 10 of the Town Warrant asked voters to decide "if the town will form a new School District, No. 17." This would have been a fourth school in the same area, to be located between SH#1 and SH#2. However, the town did not so decide.

The 1858 Town Report contains the following description of the condition of SH#1 by Superintendent William Balloch: "We have in town almost every variety and grade of School Houses, from those of modern style and finish down to the dilapidated hovel, hardly suitable for a pig-stye. In District No. 1, the location is unpleasant, and the house itself unfit to be occupied as a school-room" (8). In 1865, Superintendent Henry Ayers offered a similar opinion: "In No. 1, the house is cold and uncomfortable, and entirely unsuited for the wants of the scholars" (22). In 1873, the situation was remedied, as reported by Superintendent C. M. Palmer: "It is gratifying to record the erection of a new school house in No. 1, worthy of the district" (20). While the cost of the new building isn't specified, a schoolhouse tax of $308.11 is recorded as having been levied on District No. 1.

Sixty-two years later, in 1935, "school consolidation" was underway under the leadership of Walter L. Mason, the newly appointed Superintendent; SH#1 now comprised just four grades (grades 5-8).

In 1937, electric lights were installed at SH#1, as well as at SH#3 (Tracy) and SH#10 (South).

A few years later, Judy Rook attended SH#1, and briefly discussed her experiences there during a November 12, 2016 filmed interview for the Cornish Historical Society (henceforth a "CHS interview"), as part of a series of such interviews carried out by Laird Klingler and filmed by Billy Sharff:

> The first four years I went to City School and then I got to ride on the bus and go to the Chadbourne School… We had a two holer in the back of the room, and the woodstove in the front of the room, and some of the kids were pretty wild. I remember one day she got pretty mad at one kid and shook him by the ears, and he didn't like it and he picked up the stove poker and threatened to wrap it around her throat.
>
> *Do you remember the name of the teacher?*
>
> Mrs. Murdough.
>
> *And when you graduated, there was one common graduation?*

> Yes, we had a graduation for eighth graders at the Cornish Town Hall, but it was only the eighth graders on this side of town. We didn't have eighth grade graduation with the kids in the Flat area. They had their own graduation. When I graduated eighth grade, there were seven of us.

Schoolhouse No. 2

a.k.a. Above the Bridge, Beaman's, Saint-Gaudens.

"This school was located on the north side of Saint-Gaudens Road a bit west of the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site. It is no longer standing" (S. P. Tracy).

Concrete remains, 2025

SH#1 and SH#2, originally known as Below the Bridge and Above the Bridge (that is, the Cornish-Windsor bridge), are likely the ones that Child was referring to in this passage: "On March 14, 1786, the town voted to raise 100 pounds for schooling. At this time there were but two school districts in town" (Vol. 1, 142).

SH#1 endured until the end of the one-room school period in 1954, but SH#2 did not enjoy the same longevity. It was rebuilt in 1874, earning praised from Superintendent B. F. Spaulding: "No. 2 has a new, tasteful and convenient house which does honor to the district" (1874 Town Report, 20). In the 1877 Town Report, Superintdendent James T. Jackson also had high praise for SH#2: "This is one of the most desirable schools in town. Between teachers and pupils there is always a good understanding, which is equally praiseworthy for both... This district is without feuds, and gives the teacher a hearty support" (18).

Half a century later the luster had seemingly worn off. Superintendent Andrew P. Averill announced that the Beaman School was closing for lack of pupils and that the two remaining children were being transported to the Chadbourne school (1923 Town Report, 73). There is no record of any school being held in SH#2 after 1923, and its sale for $50 is recorded in the 1936 Cornish Town Report (67).

Just two years before its closure, SH#2 had enrolled 12 pupils, with an average attendance rate of 6.8 (placing it among the three lowest ranking schools out of eight). Interestingly, the number of recorded citizen visitors to SH#2 had been only seven (placing SH#2 dead last on this statistic). In comparison, the seven other schools had reported from 22 to 63 visitors each (1921 Town Report, Statistical Table, 53). One might speculate that all may indeed not have been well in Division 2 at that point in time.

Schoolhouse No. 3

a.k.a. Tracy - The building is currently inhabited, 51 Lang Road.

"The original building was located across Lang Road from the Tracy Homestead and was called the Tracy School. Later it was replaced by a schoolhouse on the same side of Lang Road as the Tracy Homestead. It continued to be used as a school until 1954" (S. P. Tracy).

Top left: undated photo Top right: 2025 photo
Bottom: two 2025 photos of the outhouse in back of the school

Superintendent Alvah Spaulding offered the following remarks concerning SH#3 in the 1853 Town report: "The words, 'School in District No. 3 – I'll try,' were put upon the walls in large letters of evergreens extending the whole length of one side of the room. The teacher and scholars gave ample testimony by the examination of the school at its close that they had been true to their word" (9).

Superintendent William Balloch presented a more somber picture in his 1858 report: "In No. 3, the house is valuable only as a relic of antiquity, and should be rebuilt immediately" (8). Superintendent Henry Ayers did not disagree in his 1865 report: "In No. 3, the house is hardly worthy of notice, unless it be in respect for the *aged*, and for the service it has done in time gone by" (22).

Happily, the following year, Superintendent G. W. Hunt was able to report that "In this district, a new school-house was erected in the Fall, with the intention of completing it before commencing the winter term, but for some cause the house was not finished until quite recently, and it was thought best to discontinue the school until the new school-house was completed… The school commenced again the 26th of February, to continue 6 weeks" (Cornish Town Report 1866, 12).

Seventy years later, electric lights came to SH#3 (Town Report 1937, 58 and 62).

Stuart Hodgeman (CHS interview, November 8, 2016) offered the following recollections of his education at SH#3 during its final years:

> *You attended a one room schoolhouse. Tell us about your experiences there.*
>
> Well my mother went to the same school. It was just below Tracy farm and it was about a mile from this house here so, yes, I started first grade there and I spent seven grades at that one room school with the same teacher, Mrs. Eva Bernard, and she lived in Plainfield, and in the wintertime she would stay in the Edmondson place just behind the school. So we would walk to school every day, or get a ride down with the Perrys or my folks, or slide down in the winter time, because you could get out here and shoot down the hill if you went up just on Colleen's (O'Neill) a little bit you could go without ever stopping, and in those days, they didn't sand quite as heavily, and so the roads were easily traversed by sled. That was a kind of a neat thing, back-and-forth, each day down the hill and back up.
>
> There were eight grades in the room, and I guess what I recall about it is that the teacher would do a little teaching with each grade separately and then we would have group efforts, whether it be music, spelling bees, or those kinds of things. And on Friday afternoons, we got the Good English Club where we would either listen to the Boston Pops on the radio, or we would have a discussion of people who had used bad words during the week, because there was a monitor watching amongst ourselves. It was kind of cute.
>
> At lunchtime, my grandmother who was in the house just up there, the Robbins' house, cooked a hot lunch. We would have salmon wiggle, chop suey, and soup, and all these delicious things in this pot that she would make. A couple of us would walk up the road, and it was a quarter of a mile up this road, and we would bring this big pot down and put it on the wood stove at the front part of the school - that stove as a matter of fact is in the basement to keep the basement warm. So that was our hot lunch and the teacher would parcel it out and you would have your own dish, and you were responsible for that, and so forth. There was no running water. The water came from the Rogers family down the hill, Peter Burling's place now, where we would go down and bring uphill the water and put it in a porcelain container. There were paper cups and there we were.
>
> So the facilities for the school, we had the outhouse, it was in the back, not a part of the building, and girls and boys separate, and the front part was the wood shed. As I got older, and I don't remember which grade I started, but it was a middle grade, I started going down in the mornings and sweeping the floor and starting the fire. So that was my chore for a number of years in the winter time for sure. My uncle Lionel did it before I did because he was the farmer next-door, but that was one of my jobs that I did.
>
> Speaking of which, discipline was not a big thing with Mrs. Bernard, because her demeanor was that you knew that you better behave, because Mrs. Bernard wanted you to. And if she had an unruly little kid or whatever she might give him a whack, but that wasn't the norm. She said, "OK why don't you go in the wood shed for a little bit?" The woodshed was right there hooked to the school part, the one room, and so they'd go in there and sulk for a while and that would be it. Or she had a thing on the blackboard at the top, "baby corner." So if you did something silly, stupid, or whatever, she'd get your name in the baby corner - I don't know whether she made us stand in the corner or not, that I can't remember. So discipline was not a big deal really and we had fun activities. We always had a recess, and we played ball in the spring or whenever there wasn't any mud. We played ante over the roof with the ball and all of that business, hide and seek, tag, the whole thing, all around that building.
>
> *And the music?*
>
> Oh yeah, we had music. My mother was a piano player and she would come and play the music. And she also substituted if Mrs. Bernard was ill. We'd get a call and my mother would go down and do the day with the kids.

Daisy Yatsevitch (CHS interview, September 13, 2018) did her first grade at SH#3. Then her parents moved out of state for a year, and by the time they returned, the Cornish central school was in operation. She remembers one of the older pupils at Tracy quite well:

> There were six of us in first grade, and there were six in seventh grade, and various others in grades in between. I think my sister Mary was the one third grader, but Stuart Hodgeman was in seventh grade and Mrs. Bernard placed the seventh graders… next to the first graders so that the seventh graders could help us

with our work if we needed it and could make sure that we stayed on task… Peter Blake (a fellow first grader) was a bit of a naughty boy, I remember, and so he was placed next to Stuart who was the… who was the… oh, he did things right, you know… he kept us all in line, yes, but he was very helpful, you know, I remember liking him very much…

The playground was basically just the grounds around the building and there was a little cluster of trees in the area and we would go in there to play house or, you know, whatever, and we were sent to recess probably more frequently than other kids because we were young and didn't have that much really to do...

Finally, Steve Taylor (CHS Interview, May 12, 2017), who was actually a Plainfield resident, also did his first grade at Tracy. As he explained, "at that time, Cornish and Plainfield would sometimes 'swap' students for geographical reasons." He offered the following memories:

There were 23 of us (at Tracy) in one through eight. There were three of us in first grade, and we had this marvelous teacher named Eva Bernard, a woman who I believe taught in the one-room schools of Plainfield and Cornish for over fifty years…

How in the world could there be education in a room where there were eight different grades? Well there *was* education and it was what you'd call today probably quite progressive… the eighth grade girls would help the first graders with their ABCs, and the seventh grade girls would help the second graders with their numbers and so on, and the eighth grade boys kept the fire going, the seventh grade boys would go down the hill to the Floyd Rogers farm and fetch water… and so it was a quite wonderful experience.

Eva Bernard left an indelible mark on all those who passed through the school… She had an interesting thing. She, during recess, would go out on the playground with a notebook and a pencil and she'd listen very carefully, and if she heard bad grammar, bad English usage, she would make note of it, write it down, and on Friday at one o'clock the Good English Club would be called to order. And she might call upon you and ask you to stand beside your desk, or she might say "Stevie Taylor" and you'd stand up and she would say "I heard you say 'I ain't got my coat today.'"

"What should you have said?"

"Mrs. Bernard, I should have said 'I don't have my coat today.'"

"All right, very well, you may sit down."

You never forget lessons like that.

Eva Bernard in her Own Words

A 1985 profile of Eva Bernard by Georgia Croft appeared in The Valley News newspaper on June 18, 1985. The following quotations, and photo, are taken from that article:

I was just 17 years old. I graduated from Kimball Union Academy and went right up there to Black Hill (in Plainfield) and started teaching… I don't think I was anything extra. I think I became a teacher because I liked children… (She even liked those that were bigger than her)… They were regular age for their grades. They were just big. But they weren't hard to teach. They were very interested. I never had any problems with discipline, and I think that's because they knew that I liked them, so they liked me… I think the children were more interested then (in one-room schools) than they were later in single classes. When they weren't in class themselves, they were hearing someone else's lessons. The first graders heard it over and over, so by the time they were eighth graders, they had really learned… I'm not musical at all, but I always had children who were, so when it came to teaching music, there was always someone to help… When I had a troublesome first grader, I'd seat them besides an eighth grader. Of course, if I had a troublesome eighth grader, I'd have to take care of him by myself.

LONG-TIME TEACHER — Eva Bernard spent most of her long teaching career in an eight-grade, one-room schoolhouse in Cornish, one of eight that were closed when the consolidated school was built in 1955. Although she had little education beyond high school, she spent more than 34 years educating children and retired as principal of the Cornish school. (Echoes photo — Georgia Croft)

NOTE: As listed by S. P. Tracy, there were in fact only six one-room schools left when the consolidated school replaced them: SH#1 Chadbourne, SH#3 Tracy, SH#6 Flat, SH#7 Center, SH#10 South, and SH#11 Townhouse.

Schoolhouse No. 4

a.k.a. Dingleton - This building burned to the ground some years after the S. P. Tracy description given below. There are no remains. The location is across the road and a little uphill from 300 Dingleton Hill Road.

"Located on Dingleton Hill, this schoolhouse has been extensively remodeled and is used as a residence" (S. P. Tracy).

Top left: undated interior photo
Lower left: oil painting by Elmer W. Bartlett, 1914
Top right: undated exterior photo
Lower right: photo of former school site, 2025

The 1853 Cornish Town Report contains the following paragraph by superintendent Alvah Spaulding: "The school-house in District No. 4 has been remodeled. New seats and desks have taken the place of the former ones. One scholar only can sit at each desk. The seats are benches instead of chairs. The school-room is properly ventilated. It is a pleasant and convenient room" (7). The previously presented Table shows that SH#4 enrolled 28 different pupils over the year (18 in the summer term, 23 in the winter term), the school terms were 8 and 12 weeks long, and the teachers were paid $4.00 (L. Jane Harlow) and $13.33 (Alfred Stebbins).

Fifty years later, the Statistical Table (1903 Town Report, 31) shows two terms of 10 weeks each taught by Lena C. Nevens and Maude Pagan (both with monthly wages of $20.00), with 6 and 8 pupils enrolled over the two terms.

The 1929 Town Report (50) included the following item from the Superintendent:

NEW SCHOOL BUILDING

During the spring it became evident that the school house at Dingleton had become unsafe for school occupancy. At the annual district meeting in March the sum of $1700 was raised and appropriated to build and equip a new school house. As the new building was located on the site of the old one, the contract involved the additional expense of tearing down the old brick building. Most careful specifications were worked out for a building that would meet the educational needs of the school but without any elaboration of design. The Board advertised for bids. Several were received, and the contract was awarded to Geo. D. Graham, the lowest bidder. The building was erected during the summer. The items of cost will be found in the Board's report.

Respectfully submitted,

ANDREW P. AVERILL.

Bernice (Fitch) Johnson offered a brief anecdote from her time at the Dingleton Hill School, which would have been from the mid-to-late 1920s to the early 1930s (CHS Interview, May 18, 1998):

> I went to grade school on Dingleton Hill. It was a one-room school. The first few years it was an old brick one* and Elmer Bartlett painted a picture of it, I believe… There was a wooden ell, where the woodshed was… Once every spring, Mildred Monroe (from the neighboring house at 300 Dingleton Road) would have the whole school come down for a sugaring party… and every single year… the next day I'd be at home so sick... (because) I have an intolerance for sugar…
>
> *Note: the brick building was torn down and replaced with a wooden one in 1928, at a cost of 1802.26 dollars.

The 1928 Town Report lists Bernice Fitch as one of the 11 Cornish pupils (out of 177) with a perfect attendance record - no absences, no latenesses (58). This was the only such list presented in the School Report section during these years, but it is safe to assume that Bernice's name would have appeared again, had more lists been produced.

Calvin Monroe, who lived in the house at 300 Dingleton Hill Road as a child, also spoke briefly of doing all eight of his grades at Dingleton School (CHS interview, January 18, 2017):

> *Tell us about life in a one-room schoolhouse.*
>
> It was just, you went to school, there weren't many children, there was one teacher… She'd give you a lesson and you'd work on that, and she'd go to the next grade and work on that… I know that I was… I discovered when I went to high school that I should have had better, better teaching at the grade school level… we were never given any kind of lesson to take home when we were in grade school… and that was an eye-opener when I went to high school.
>
> The year I graduated from there, they closed the school down.

There is no record in the Town Reports of any school being held in SH#4 beyond 1937.

Schoolhouse No. 5

a.k.a. Capt. Seth Johnson's, Walker's, Huggins', Hell Hollow School.

"This school was located at the juncture of Saint-Gaudens Road and Hell Hollow Road. It is no longer standing. It was known as the Huggins School" (S. P. Tracy).

Remains of a stone wall, intersection of St. Gaudens Road and Hell Hollow Road, 2025

Superintendent William Balloch offers this summary of the year at SH#5 in the 1858 Town Report (6):

District No. 5.—Prudential Committee, NELSON KENYON. Amount of school money, $59,58; contributed, $30,00. Number of scholars in summer, 17; in winter, 16. The summer term, of 8 weeks, was taught by Miss EMERETT AYRES, of Cornish. The School closed without notice. It appeared well at the commencement. The winter term, of 12 weeks, was taught by FRANK D. NEVENS, of Cornish. This was his first attempt at teaching. Not quite as strict discipline existed as there should be; yet the scholars made very commendable progress.

He also adds a somewhat cryptic comment about SH#5: "In No. 5 the teacher remarks that the house has completed its three score and ten years, and he thinks its room would be far better than its company" (8).

Almost half a century later, at the cost of $179.61, SH#5 is "thoroughly repaired and reseated; so that it is now considered the prettiest room in town" (1904 Town Report, 26 and 29).

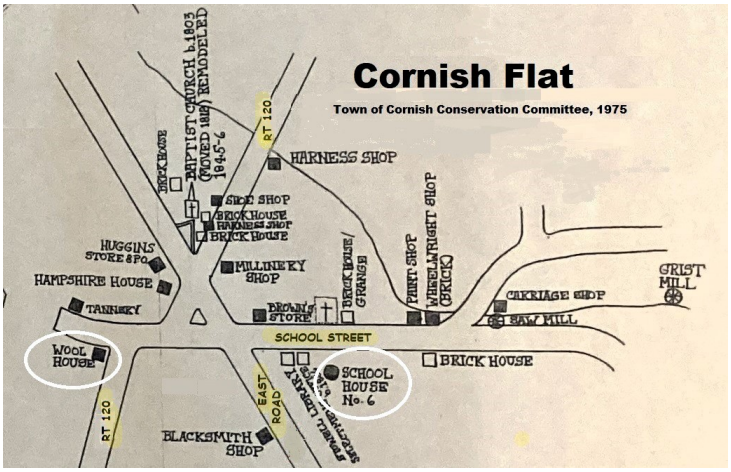
The 1916 Town Report presents the last SH#5 enrollment count: 3 and 4 pupils, taught by L. Hazel Robinson and Lena Skinner (34), and the 1936 Town Report records the sale of SH#5 in 1934 for $25 (67).

Schoolhouse No. 6

a.k.a. School House Hall, The Flat School - The building is currently the Masonic Hall at 36 School Street in Cornish Flat. The first SH#6, at 236 Route 120, is currently inhabited.

"This district encompassed the area now known as Cornish Flat. The original school was a brick building located on the west side of Route 120 opposite the end of School Street. This brick building later became the 'Wool House' and is now being used as a dwelling. In 1878 a new and larger schoolhouse was erected, and this new building continued to be used as a school until 1954. It is now the Masonic Building" (S. P. Tracy).

NOTE: The only mention of the new SH#6 in the Town Reports that could be found was from 1881: "There has been in district No. 6 a new school building erected during the past year – large and commodious, with two rooms, one of which is very handsomely furnished, making it not only the best school building in town, but one of the best in the county' (14). This would imply that the construction date was actually 1880.



The above map, based on a highly detailed 1892 map published by D. H. Hurd & Co., presents historical sites in Cornish, and shows the locations of the original SH#6 (later, the "Wool House") and that of the newer SH#6 (now the Masonic Building). The state road through Cornish Flat (Route 120) was "straightened out" at some point in the 20th century. Otherwise, the current street layout is the same.

Top left: original Schoolhouse No. 6 / Wool House, now a private residence, 2025
Top right: undated photo of the newer Schoolhouse No. 6 Bottom: the current Masonic Hall, 2025

The 1853 School Report showed SH#6 to have by far the largest enrollment of all the Cornish schools, with a total of 94 pupils over three terms of 16, 12, and 12 weeks length. Monthly teacher wages were $4.00 and $7.00 for Hannah F. Davis and Sarah A. Martindale, and $18.00 for William H. Fletcher.
Twenty-five years later, the enrollment had fallen to 54, but this was still more than twice as much as any of the other schools (1878 Town Report, 2). This pattern held through the end of the 19th century.

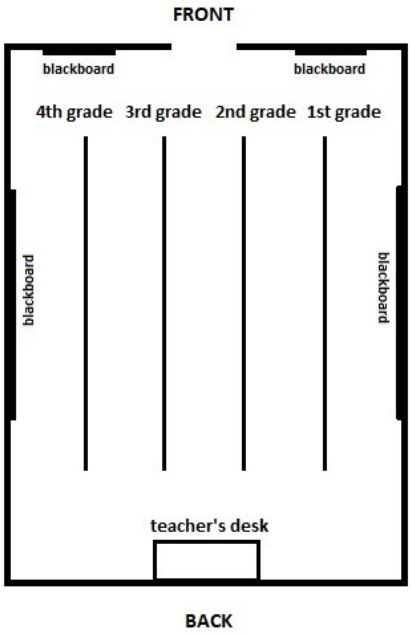
Possibly as a result of its high enrollment, SH#6 was graded prior to 1869, with a "Primary Department" and a "Principal Department." The former was for younger children, as indicated in this remark: "It requires a very ingenious mind to provide work that will interest and engage the mind of small pupils like these" (1862 Town Report, 16). The latter was for the older (and more rambunctious) students: "Many of the scholars seemed to be whispering and laughing at pleasure. Some of the scholars seemed to entertain the idea that they are to discipline the school" (1865 Town Report, 19). In 1869, the two departments "were united" (Town Report, 13), much to the displeasure of Superintendent Henry A. Day: "I feel it is lamentable that this district do not feel able to support a graded school" (1870 Town Report, 13).

Indeed, superintendent reviews of SH#6 during these years ran the gamut from critical remarks such as "a school not particularly noted for correct habits and scholarly conduct" (Geo. W. Hunt, 1866 Town Report, 12) to laudatory remarks such as "It does one good to visit this school. Busy as bees – happy as birds in a June morning… No time for idleness or play" (James T. Jackson, 1876 Town Report, 19).

Over the course of the twentieth century, with the gradual decrease in the number of schools, other divisions (SH#1 Chadbourne, SH#3 Tracy, SH#7 Center, SH#10 South, SH#11 City) reached enrollment levels similar to those at SH#6. These were in fact the six schools that would survive until 1954.

Leland Atwood, interviewed by Ginny Gage and me on April 2, 2025, provided many details about the teaching routine at the Flat School, which he attended from the first to the third grade in the late 1940s. (He completed his fourth and fifth grades at SH#10 South, sixth grade at SH#7 Center, seventh grade at SH#3 Tracy, and eighth grade at the new consolidated school.)

The SH#6 seating plan below was drawn up based on his description.



Below are various recollections of Leland Atwood regarding the basic routines at the Flat School:

We went from 9 to 2:30. We had a 10 o'clock recess for 15 minutes. Then… 12 to 1 was a lunch hour. And then we went from 1 to 2:30.Why they had the long lunch hour, a lot of us, like me, went home for dinner every day, or lunch. The ones that lived right around the Flat here, about half of them, went home.

And the whole hour couldn't be spent just eating. It was also playing, right?

Playing out on the playground.

What kind of games did the kids play back then?

Oh, they had hide and go-seek and dodgeball.

Did the teacher ever join in?

Oh, she was always out there with us.

And who was it?

Winnie Barton. You probably know her as Winnie Brooks.

I know the name. So what was her style of teaching? I mean, she had like maybe 30 kids…

Oh yeah, 30, 32, 35. And she'd have stuff on the boards for them to do, and then she'd take different classes up to the table, and she would read with them, and stuff like that. And then she'd, you know, do some with each class. Two, three classes would be working while she had one doing something... Other than that, if she was doing something for the whole class, then she'd stand right in the middle of the room.

… (in) the morning she had math on all the blackboards. Some were for the first grade and some for the second and everything. You did your math and she collected them up… (there was) a spelling book with a work page in it… She'd tell each person what to do… If she was doing a spelling or reading class with one class, the other three would do the same thing, either math, spelling, or geography, or whatever it was.

We had a little bit of history… We did a lot of things too, like for history (at Thanksgiving) we'd do stuff on the pilgrims coming over and Columbus and all of that… On Memorial Day we had to go down and sing at the church down here*, the Meetinghouse… We also done the cemeteries too, like this cemetery across the street; we had to go and put flags in.

(* the Atwood residence is on School Street in Cornish Flat, just a few houses up from the Masonic Hall)

What was the water situation? Did you have running water?

Yeah, we had to run for it. We went across the street here to get the water. They had a pail, special, it had a cover that went on it, and they brought it over into a water jug. And they had paper cups.

How about firewood? Who brought in the firewood?

Oh, in the winter, it was always in the woodshed. The wood shed was right on the building… And the teacher would have some of the kids, the bigger boys, get the wood. I don't know if you've ever been in this schoolhouse when they have the Mason breakfast. If you go in there, you'll see black marks where coals fell out and burnt the floor.

They had the woodshed out there and both bathrooms, and you didn't have to go outdoors to go to the bathroom.

That was a luxury, right? Most of the schools, the outhouses were out back and you had to go out, right?

Yeah, I know, the boys had to go out at Center, and at Tracy School everybody went out. South was like here, you could go without going outdoors.

Fred Sullivan, who was two years ahead of Leland Atwood, attended grades 1-2-3 at the Flat School, grades

4-5 at the South School, grades 6-7 at the Center School for grades 6-7, and he did grade 8 in Claremont. Here are some extra details about SH#6 from his interview with Ginny Gage and me on March 25, 2025:

Which schoolhouses did you go to?

I went to three of them. I started out at the Flat in the Masonic Hall. That was a schoolhouse and a Masonic Hall at the same time* but the Masons were upstairs and that was out of bounds for us kids. We walked in the entryway, the stairs went upstairs, and us kids and the teacher went right in to the main room.

* at this time, the upper floor of the building was being rented to the Masons; they purchased the entire building when the one-room schoolhouses were shut down

Now in the winter, it must have been cold. Did you have a wood stove there?

Yes, a wood stove. The outhouses were very cold, no heat in the outhouses, the girls' outhouse and the boys' outhouse. They were in back of the building. Two holers.

You didn't have two people in there at the same time did you?

Well, if you know, women at all, many women won't go to the bathroom alone, and the little girls was the same, they went in together.

Back to the cold and the stove. Who had to bring in the wood?

Usually, it was somebody that the day before they hadn't behaved themselves and the teacher said, "all right you've got wood duty" and they have to bring it in. It was always a boy. I handled all the wood because my father sold wood to all these schoolhouses and he'd take it down and dump it in front of the woodshed, and then when I got old enough so that I could throw it in, I'd throw it in, and if I didn't behave myself, I'd get appointed to go out in the woodshed and stack the wood, so I got pretty close to all the wood.

When you came in to the building, was there like a vestibule where you could hang your coats and so on?

Yup, all the coat hanging, some of it lower for the little kids, and some up higher for the other ones, and we brought tin lunch boxes, and there was a ceramic pitcher of water with a little push button and a bunch of paper cups. We went with a bucket to the lady who lived across the road. She gave us water for the pitcher. The boys also did that.

NEWSFLASH

SCHOOL CHILDREN RETURN TO THE FLAT SCHOOL

Lauren Edward's kindergarten class meets alums Judy Rook and Fred Sullivan

Linda Fuerst organizer, May 14, 2025

One old school desk remains.

Floorboards charred by stove.

Schoolhouse No. 7

a.k.a. Center - Currently inhabited, at the intersection of Center Road and Paget Road.

"This building was located adjacent to the brick church at the Center and served as a school until 1954. It has been converted into a residence" (S. P. Tracy).

Undated photo

2025 photo

The 1853 statistical Table shows that SH#7 was the third most populated school (after SH#6 Flat and SH#11 City) with an enrollment of 57 pupils. Teacher pay was $4.50 for Isabell Deming and $14.00 for Jacob T. Sargeant, and two terms of 12 weeks each were held. The following year, the SH#7 teacher closed the school early "because, on account of various things, he preferred to do it" (1854 Town Report, 10). There is no further elaboration concerning this event.

In 1855, SH#7 was the second most populated school after the Flat. SH#7, with some fluctuations, remained a top-tier school in terms of enrollment over the following 100 years. For example, in 1900 it was in the top five, and in 1930 it came in second with 26 pupils, after SH#11 City (31 pupils) but ahead of SH#6 Flat (23 pupils).

Given its size, it seems a little odd that there are comparatively few mentions of the Center School in the Town Reports over the decades. Perhaps this is a case of "no news is good news" or at least "just a little bit of news is pretty good news." There *is* a glowing report by Superintendent William Balloch (13-14) in the 1859 Town Report:

The Fall term of eight weeks was taught by Miss Helen M. Richardson, of Charlestown, N. H. Miss R. is an experienced teacher, and seems to be one of those favored few on whom nature has bestowed the gift of teaching. At the closing examination, which took place in the presence of some thirty-five of the citizens and friends of the school, the scholars acquitted themselves handsomely in every exercise. The teacher reports that not one scholar whispered or asked leave to speak in school hours during the term. In short it was as near a *model* school as any that I have witnessed in town. Number of scholars, 31.

Superintendent A. G. Vinton rendered a more mitigated judgment a year later (1860 Town Report, 12):

Horace L. Deming, Prudential Committee. Amount of School money, $89 31. Miss Sula A. Smith kept the Summer Term of School. At my first visit this School seemed to promise much, but about the middle of the term, there was a misunderstanding or difficulty between the teacher and some of the scholars, which much impaired the usefulness of the School. The scholars present at my last visit appeared to have made good progress in their studies. Length of School, 12 weeks; number of scholars, 27.

Be that as it may, the Center School did last until the very end of the one-room schoolhouse period.

Schoolhouse No. 8

a.k.a. Goward - Located in the hollow, next to the brook, below the intersection of Mace and East Roads. "Located on the East Road, this building is no longer standing" (S. P. Tracy).

Top: SH#8 at center of landscape, undated photo taken from uphill, towards Tifft Road
Bottom left: undated photo Bottom right: stone and concrete remains, 2025

This schoolhouse stood on the northern edge of my property in Cornish. I first became aware of the fact that the stones and cement remains there had been a one-room schoolhouse when Selma (Urbahn) Lovejoy, the grandmother of a childhood friend, Robert Hier, informed me of that fact more than fifty years ago, and further told me that she had taught there.

The 1924 Town Report (57) presents the following school enrollment statistics for September 1923 through February 1924, in which Selma Urbahn makes her first official appearance:

The fall term began on the fifth of September, and the following table shows the teacher's name and the registration for each school.

Teacher	School	Tl. Enrollment to Feb. 1
Ruth P. Twombly	Flat	21
Selma Urbahn	Goward	14
Doris B. Williams	South	17
Vera L. Tewksbury	Brick	7
Leslie A. S. Davis	City	24
Louise E. Schultz	Centre	13
Helen L. Flower	Chadbourne	13
Marion Spalding	Tracy	12
Emma Oliver	Dingleton	13
	Total	134

Below is an extract of a letter which Rob Hier wrote decades ago to his future wife Annemarie, describing Selma Urbahn's first day in Cornish (she was originally from the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, NY):

> Lots of good talk with Grandmom. Best of all, she told me of her first day of teaching when she was 17 years old in 1923.
>
> She was living in Charlestown and had spent the summer at Keene State College getting her teaching degree. Then, on the day before she was to teach school, she took the train from Charlestown to Claremont, changed at the Junction (next to Jct. Restaurant) and arrived in the center of Claremont Station (tracks just below Dunkin) and called the Superintendent of Schools who was to pick her up and get her settled with her boarding family. She called until 6 PM until she got an answer and another teacher from the Cornish Flat School (the old building right next to Harold's house) answered and came to pick her up in his car. He took her to a house just above where Mark P. lives in Cornish, but the woman who had agreed to take her, refused. So, they went looking for another place to stay for her, but finally came back at 9:30 or so, and the teacher finally convinced the woman to take my grandmother. She was led up the stairs to her room and told she would be called in the morning. No supper was offered, no toilet was shown to her, but she was so tired. She quickly fell asleep. Next morning, she was given breakfast, a bag lunch, and with not more than a couple of words spoken to her, left down the road to teach her first day of class. The one-room schoolhouse was just below where Mark's house stands, right on the corner where the road turns down to route 120. She had 17 students in all grades, and absolutely no materials were supplied. Luckily, she brought some chalk.
>
> The silent treatment at the house she was staying at continued for two weeks until she moved out and into the house of a family friend living on the road going to the present Cornish school. And, she was lucky to have been able to move in because the 16 year-old daughter of the family had only died shortly before, and, the husband, just shortly before that, had gone crazy and had to be committed in a mental hospital for the rest of his life.

Turning the clock back to 1853, the Table from that year's School Report by Alvah Spaulding shows that $66.32 were expended on SH#8; that Betsy A. Ayers and Josiah Davis were the teachers and that their monthly wages were $5 and $17 respectively; that two terms of 10 and 12 weeks were held; and that the total

number of different pupils over the year was 49, giving SH#8 the fourth highest enrollment in Cornish after SH#6 Flat (94), SH#11 City (57), and SH#7 Center (54).

Going a little further back, an entry in the Sullivan County Deed Book 42, page 207, dated October 8, 1847, states that, in consideration of $10.00, Asa Nevens (the Nevens family being the earliest owners of my current property) is leasing a certain tract of land to School District No. 8, said tract to be delivered back to Asa Nevens, his heirs and assigns, at the (unspecified) expiration of the term.

Moving forward, the 1882 Cornish Town Report states that the schoolhouse "in District No. 8 is the only one that is entirely unfit for use" (13), and the following year's report announces that a new building has been erected which is "now one of the best in town" (16).

By the turn of the century, the number of pupils in SH#8 was down to 13 (1900 Town Report, 28), and by 1935, SH#8 Goward, along with SH#9 Town House and SH#13 Brick, had been closed (1935 Town Report, 56). The following inscription appears on the back of the undated close-up photograph of SH#8 presented two pages earlier: "Willard Eastman took it down and used it to build a shed."

SH#8 may have been dismantled, but its outhouse was still standing. Some years later, it was hauled to Cornish Flat to serve as a bathroom for a garage operated by Ellsworth Atwood. And some years still later, it was hauled again to the Decatur home just north of the Flat at the intersection of Route 120 and Burr Road, to be used as a snowmobile shed. There it remains to this day.

The former Goward outhouse, 2025

Schoolhouse No. 9

a.k.a. Town School, Town House School, and currently known as Little Town Hall - On Town House Road, just below the current Cornish Elementary School. The only former one-room schoolhouse still owned by the Town, it was renovated and rotated to face the Cornish Town Hall in 2004.

"This building was located adjacent to the Town Hall. It has been kept in good repair and is now called the Little Town Hall" (S. P. Tracy).

Top left: Town Hall and Schoolhouse No. 9, undated Top right: renovation and rotation of SH#9, 2004
Bottom: Little Town Hall/Schoolhouse No. 9, 2025

Superintendent Spaulding's 1853 report shows that 17 and 23 pupils were in attendance over two terms, one 10 weeks long, the other 11 weeks long, It also contains a glowing account of a newly rebuilt SH#9:

In District No. 9 a new school-house has been built. It is a noble and beautiful house. Its size, form, and construction of its different parts will promote the health, comfort and convenience of teacher and scholars. The school-room is spacious, easily warmed, and provided with two ventilators. The desks are suitably elevated. Two scholars may sit at each of them. The seats are chairs instead of benches, and are made fast in their places by iron fixtures. Several moveable chairs are also furnished for the use of scholars or visitors who may wish to occupy them. The teacher's desk is in one corner of the school-room upon a platform of seven or eight inches in height. At the desk the teacher has at a single glance a full view of all the scholars. Adjoining the school-room on one side as you enter the outer door, is a suitable place for the deposit of wood, and upon the other side a place for garments. Had the desks been formed to accommodate only one scholar instead of two, it would have been a model school-house, unequalled probably by any school-house in the County or State.

By 1900, SH#9 was still running two 10 week terms, but with an enrollment of just 13 students in the summer and 14 in the winter. The 1922 Town Report lists SH#9 as open and running, with Dorothy Skinner teaching (49), but the school then went unused for several years. It was reopened in 1931-32 “to accommodate the surplus of pupils at the City School” (1932 Town Report, 74), and stayed open for two more years before closing down for good at the end of the 1933-34 school year (1935 Town Report, 56).

Here is a brief description of SH#9 from the CHS Recording "One Room Schoolhouses (July 8, 2016) by Dwight Wood (born 1911) who attended the school along with Ruth Bugbee (also born 1911) whom he married in 1933:

> When we first started school in the fall of 1917, my wife and I went to the school down over the hill from the present school. There were nine to twelve children in the school. An old box stove stood in the middle of the room. In the winter there was always wood laid around the stove to dry out so that it would burn better. We got our water from a spring on the corner of the brook over beyond the Town Hall. The toilets were in an outhouse about fifty feet in back of the schoolhouse. On a cold day it was a quick journey out there and back...
>
> NOTE: in the video recording, the author of the letter from which the above extract is taken is misidentified as James B. Fitch, born 1884, grandfather of the currently living James C. Fitch. A search through genealogical and school records convincingly suggests that Dwight Wood is the actual author, a conclusion with which James C. Fitch concurs.

Marjerie Kidder, in the same CHS Recording, talks about when she started teaching at SH#9 in Cornish in 1931:

> When I first came to school to Cornish I taught at the Townhouse School which is the one right near the Town Hall. I had all eight grades and the children all walked to school. I can't remember exactly how many pupils I had, but I had at least one in most every grade. And I think that back in those days, children learned a lot from hearing older children recite because when it would become their turn to learn certain things, they'd already know them. We always started school with my reading to the children. I felt that calmed them down, made them ready to work, because ... the school day was a lot longer than now.
>
> Once in a great while, some person in the community would do the janitor work, but usually it was one of the students, or a group of students... and you can imagine what I had to do after work because they, well, they didn't know how or they didn't do it well, and when we had a wood stove of course I had to keep the fire going as well as tend to the students... I used to read to the children and in all the years I taught them I never had but just one child who didn't want to be read to, and got children interested in books.

Marjerie Kidder celebrates her 95th birthday at the United Church of Cornish. (Ruth Rollins photo)

Eagle Times, March 30th 2001

Schoolhouse No. 10

a.k.a. Edminster, South - Situated on Route 120 diagonally across from Jackson Road, the building is currently inhabited. As indicated on the 1851 map, the original building was located on the west side of Route 120, south of the intersection with Edminster Road. The school was moved to its present site in 1893.

"This school was located at South Cornish. Originally it was on the west side of what is now Route 120 but was relocated to the east side. It was used as a school until 1954. It is now privately owned" (S. P. Tracy).

2025 photo

It Only Took Thirty-Five Years

The 1858 School Report by Superintendent William Balloch found that in District No. 10 "the house is quite too small for the number of scholars, and in very bad condition" (1858 Town Report, 8). Balloch did, however, seem reasonably pleased with the teaching that occurred within it (6-7):

District No. 10.—Prudential Committee, NEHEMIAH LEAR. Amount of school money, $81,37; contributed, $10,00. Number of scholars in summer, 18; in winter, 32. The summer term, of 10 weeks, was taught by Miss ELLEN M. SPAULDING, of Cornish. The teacher seemed rather young for the School; yet at the close there was evidence that she had performed her duties well. The closing examination was satisfactory. The winter school was under the instruction of WORTHEN H. AMES, of Newport. The teacher was energetic and persevering; but a portion of the scholars became dissatisfied, and serious difficulty was apprehended. At length several of the larger boys withdrew from the School, and then things went on harmoniously. I think the School was lengthened two weeks by contribution. I was glad to see several of the citizens present at the closing examination. There was evidence that the scholars had not misspent their time. Length of School, 10 weeks.

Ten years later, Superintendent George W. Hunt renewed the call to renovate No. 10 (along with No. 1 and 2): "Permit me to say that School Districts No. 1, 2 and 10 ought to devise means to 'reconstruct' their school houses, or else there is danger that they may be reconstructed by a power outside of the district" (1868 Town Report, 15).

1873 Town Report (18): “Let me say to the citizens of this district, that their children are worthy of better accommodations than their school house can furnish” (C. M. Palmer, Superintendent).

1874 Town Report (19): “An experienced teacher, and has evidently improved with age. *But the school-house has* not” (B. P. Spalding, Superintendent).

1877 Town Report (20): “Your children are worthy of a *good school house. At once,* repair or build” (James T. Jackson, Superintendent).

1885 Town Report (16): School No. 10 “is not what we should expect in this enterprising portion of town, and should be rebuilt at once“ (George L. Deming, Superintendent).

1889 Town Report (18): “In Division 10 a new house is needed or extensive repairs should be made” (C. Pike, W. H. Child, H. Deming, School Board).

1890 Town Report (23): “A new house, or quite extensive repairs is really needed in Div. 10” (W. H. Child, H. Deming, School Board).

1891 Town Report (25): “We still feel it our duty to recommend the building and furnishing of a new house in division No. 10. It is the second school in size in the district, and its accommodations are vastly inferior to those of any other house in the district. We hope the district will favorably consider the article in the warrant relating thereto” (H. Deming, G. L. Deming, W. H. Child, School Board).

1892 Town Report (18): July 3, 1891, “Voted that the school house to be built in Division Ten be located in place of the old one, and that the proper authorities be empowered to take such additional land as necessary for the same.”

1893 Town Report (23): The budget was published and the new school remained in use through 1954.

Report of the Building Committee of the new school house near South Cornish Post Office.

RECEIPTS.

Money raised by vote of the district	$500 00
Of Austin Corbin for school house in dist. No. 12	75 00
Donations from Austin Corbin, Wm. M. Evarts and C. C. Beaman	175 00
Total amount of receipts	$750 00

EXPENDITURES.

Paid expenses of committee for year 1891	$ 28 28
Daniel H. Weld, for school house lot	21 00
Contractors, for building new house	488 00
Furniture for school house	105 22
A. P. Thrasher, drawing and unpacking furniture,	3 00
S. H. Andrews, setting up furniture and other work,	7 45
I. Putnam, labor on furniture, &c.	2 50
Geo. E. Fairbanks, for labor and lumber	1 58
S. H. Andrews, for lumber	1 25
Miller & Putnam, stove, pipe, damper, zinc, &c.	15 30
County Commissioner's bill	38 20
Building Committee, for services	36 10
	$747 88

Balance remaining in the hands of committee, $2 12

Respectfully submitted,

JAMES W. FITCH, } Building
SAMUEL PUTNAM, } Committee.

On April 1, 2025, Marilyn Quimby sat down with Ginny Gage and me to reminisce about her seven years at the South School (1944-51).

So you did eight grades there?

I didn't go to the first grade. I did seven grades there.

What happened to first grade?

My mother was a teacher.

Oh, so basically, you were home-schooled?

Well, in today's world, that's what they call it, yeah.

How come your mom decided to send you to school after the first grade? Why not home-school you all along?

She did that, all three of us.

So how many grades did they have at South?

There were only four grades when I first went there, first through fourth. Fifth through eighth were over at Cornish Flat. And we had a bus that took care of getting us back and forth. And when I became a fifth grader, they swapped schools. They put the young kids up in Cornish Flat, and the older ones down in South.

How did you feel about that?

We didn't want to go back to the same school. We had to stand all over in the front row and work our way to the back of the room again!

How did the teacher teach four grades at the same time?

Each grade had their seats fairly close together. Like if you look at that picture (*see below), the grades down way in the front were the youngest. And you kept moving back a grade each year until you were in the back row, your last grade there… She always had assignments going. "Study these pages and we'll talk them over later."

Who were your teachers; do you remember their names?

Mrs. Winifred Barton, she was Brooks then, she was a nice teacher. Mrs. Kidder, that's her in the photo. Fred's mother, Mrs. Bertha Sullivan, Mrs. Smith...

Who was your favorite teacher?

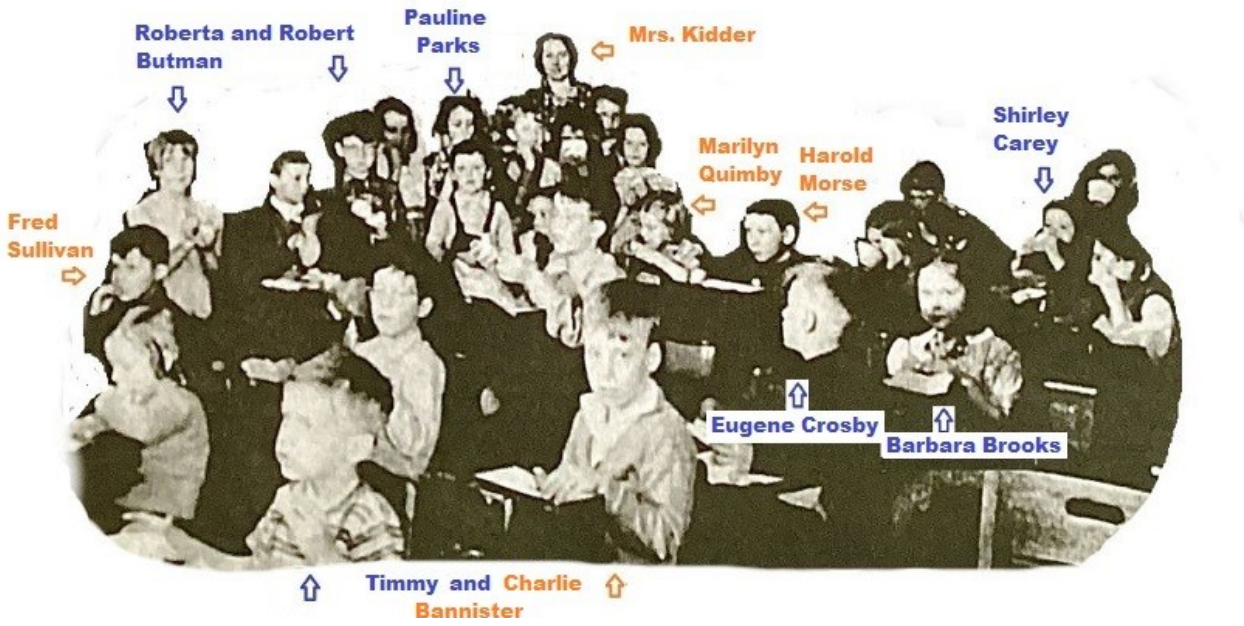
My favorite teacher was in my older grades, Miss Doris Williams.

Tell us a bit about her.

Miss Williams taught us a few extra things like art and music. Whatever she knew, she would teach. We would go up on the Lears' hill in the autumn and paint the picture of Mount Ascutney as best we could see it, with all the colors. Not really painted; it was crayolas, crayons. We also used to go there with cardboard and slide down in the winter.

Inside the South School circa the mid-1940s

The people with orange names are featured in the text. Blue names do not appear in the text. Identifications were made by Marilyn Quimby, Fred Sullivan, and Leland Atwood.

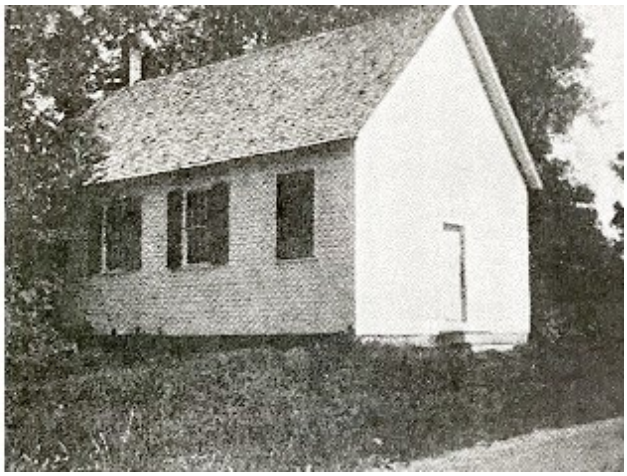


Schoolhouse No. 11

a.k.a. City, currently inhabited at 628 Townhouse Road.

"This schoolhouse was located on the Townhouse Road at Cornish City and it continued to be used as a school until 1954. It has been converted into a residence" (S. P. Tracy).

2025 photo



Undated photo, circa 1900

The statistical table in the 1853 Town Report (12) shows a total of 57 different scholars enrolled in SH#11, second only to SH#6 with 94 pupils. Two terms, one of 8 weeks and the other of 4 ½ weeks, were taught by Julia A. Wood ($6 monthly wage) and George E. Erskine ($15 monthly wage).

In the 1857 Town Report, Superintendent Lyman Hall offered the following assessment: "In district 11, the taxpayers have shown commendable zeal and liberality in building a model School-House and completing it with ventilator and blinds. This is the most spacious and symmetrical School-Room in town. The influence on the scholars was apparent" (6).

Another glowing report, this one regarding the teaching at SH#11, was issued by Superintendent Henry M. Day (1870 Town Report, 20):

District No. 11.—"CITY."

Amount of school money, $81.58. Miss Alice V. Powers taught this school, Summer and Winter. Miss P. is an accomplished scholar and possesses the faculty of imparting instruction to others, in such a manner that it cannot fail of making a lasting impression. The appearance of the school, both terms, was highly commendable. Her scholars were students, obedient and wide awake. In no school in town have I witnessed more enthusiasm on the part of the pupils than here. At the close, the teacher subjected her scholars to a rigid and thorough examination in the different branches to which attention had been paid, and they acquitted themselves in an entirely satisfactory manner. I can unreservedly indorse the teachers remark in the register, that the "opprobrium that has so long clung to this school, has found no place with it this year."

Some thirty-five years later, enrollment at the City School had fallen to 8, 9, and 10 students over the course of three 10 week terms (1905 Town Report, Statistical Report, 35).

The 1930 Town Report showed a considerable rebound in enrollment, with 31 students, making SH#11 the largest school in town that year.

By 1940, the school had been electrified, as shown by a $15.91 bill for “lights at City for year” from the Central Vermont Public Service Corporation (1940 Town Report, 66).

And City was the final member of the group of six schools that survived until 1954:

- SH#1 Chadbourne
- SH#3 Tracy
- SH#6 Flat
- SH#7 Center
- SH#10 South
- SH#11 City

Dwight Wood and Judy Rook offered the following brief recollections of their time at City:

> One year, there were only three children in our division (SH#9 Townhouse) for school: Ruth and I and a boy from the house now owned by the Kenyons. We walked to the City School, it being just under two miles for each of us. School was in session from 9 to 12 and 1 to 4. If you were near enough school you walked home. Otherwise we carried our lunch, there being no hot lunches. Sometime in the 1920s they started having hot food brought in by some of the parents, or if no one brought food, the teacher would usually make hot cocoa. Many times in the winter it would be dark by the time you got home from school. The superintendent of schools would drop in, and if you were the one reciting at the time he came, wow!
>
> (Dwight Wood letter, read out on July 8, 2016 CHS recording "One Room Schoolhouses")

> I went to school four years at the City School on Townhouse Road. I had Mrs. Barton in the first grade, and I had Mrs. Kidder in the second, third, and fourth grade. There were approximately five to seven children in each class. We had a two holer in the back of the school. The City School was built against an embankment, so you had to walk this long hallway to get to it. Of course, there was no heat up there either. We had a woodstove at the back of the room, and we had a basin and a ceramic water jar stand nearby. The boys used to go over the bank down by Spaulding’s to the spring to get water. That was from 1944 to 1947.
>
> (Judy Rook, from July 8, 2016 CHS recording "One Room Schoolhouses")

> (That) first school was half a mile up the road around the corner. It was called City School. So I always thought, “That’s great – I live in the City!” But I didn’t...
>
> ... when you came down from the bathroom you had to wash your hands (in the basin). But we all washed our hands in the same water; it was never changed. And a lot of times kids didn’t come to school all that clean because in summers everybody ran out of water. I know we did. We didn’t have water in the summertime and sometimes it didn’t come back until October. So we’re in school with just sponge baths or we’d run down to the brook with a washcloth.. but the ceramic jug was for drinking.
>
> *How about the wintertime, with the fire; who was responsible for the wood?*
>
> I don’t know who brought the wood to us, but the teacher was responsible for them. She’d have the fourth grade boys going to the shed to bring the wood out and put it by the stove, and then she would manage the stove.
>
> *How did you react when you were in the younger group being in the same classroom with older students?*
>
> It was fine. There wasn’t much difference being in one room. You were all, like, classmates. I was in first grade, my sister was in the second grade and my brother was in the fourth grade in the same school at the same time. So family was there.

> I do remember the first day of school I didn't want to go and my mother took me up and I cried, because we had walked, because we didn't have a bus, I cried and I cried and cried, and the teacher said "I can't have her stay here if she's going to cry." So my mother says ok. So she brought me home, she plunked me down my brother's high chair and she said, "When you're ready to go back to school you let me know, because you're not going to stay home today. You're going to go to school. You can cry all you want, you're going to school." So I figured I might as well stop crying. It wasn't going to help, and she took me back to school, and I was fine after that.
>
> (Judy Rook, from October 20, 2016 CHS recording "The Rooks")

As mentioned earlier, the first eleven school districts had all been established by 1807 and covered the entire town of Cornish. Five more were added over subsequent years through the subdivision of some of the previously existing districts. The last to be established was district no. 16 ("Texas") in the far north eastern section of town which was annexed from Grantham in 1844; this was roughly at the time when Cornish's population peaked.

The population decline started in the decade of the 1840s, and the schools "that first suffered from the lack of patronage were the last ones formed, namely: Numbers 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16" (Child, Vol. 1, 144). These are the schools to be examined below. Only one is still standing, and there is considerably less information about these five as compared to that which is available concerning the first eleven.

Schoolhouse No. 12

a.k.a. Poppysquash, Poppy Squash (later, the number 12 was assigned to the Red School in an entirely different location).

The original #12 site is just inside Corbin's Park (which bought the property around 1891), a few hundred feet from the West Pass Gate, one of several gates that serve as entrances to the fully fenced-in 27,000 acre hunting preserve. This entrance is located on the Class VI eastern section of West Pass Gate Road.

"The original schoolhouse was located in Poppysquash inside what is now the Blue Mountain Association (Corbin's Park) near the West Pass Gate. It was torn down and the Number 12 was assigned to a schoolhouse erected in 1818 near the Cornish line on Route 120. This latter building is no longer standing" (S. P. Tracy).

2025 photo - requests to visit the site went unanswered

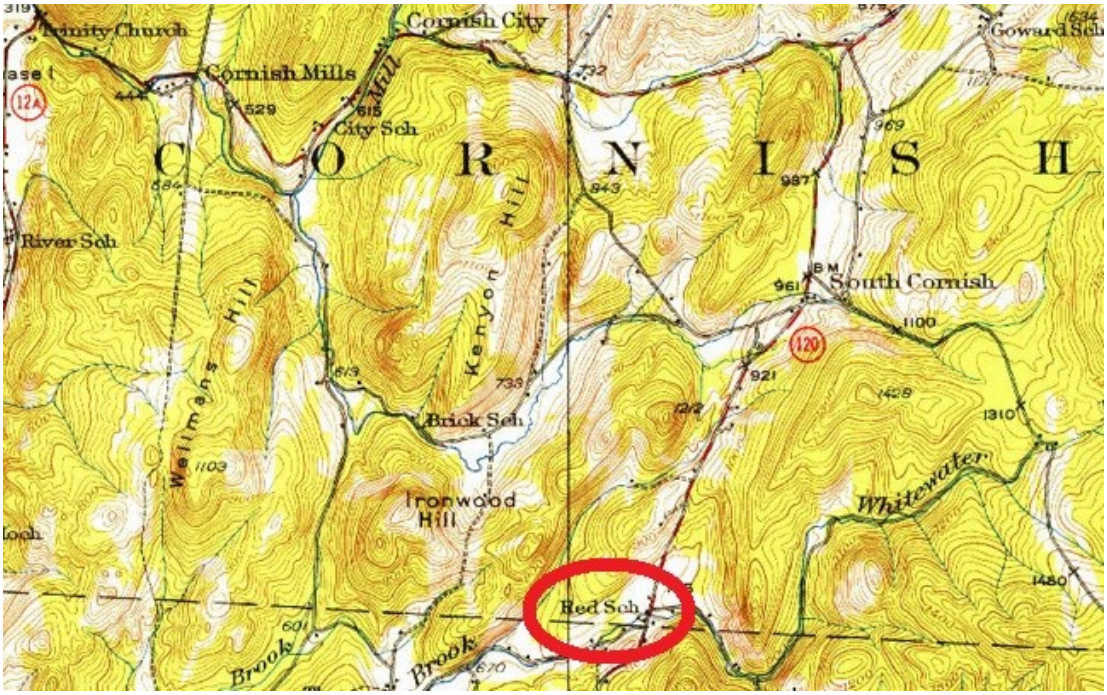
The 1853 statistical Table (15) shows an enrollment of 14 pupils. That year, only SH#5 had a lower enrollment, with 12 pupils. In the 1869 Town Report, Superintendent George W. Hunt wrote that "the school was so small as hardly to merit the name. But one pupil was present at my first visit, and fearing that there might be less if I visited it again, I refrained from doing so" (15).

The last record of Poppy Squash being open appears in the 1889 Town Report (26) with 4 pupils attending both the summer and fall terms. The 1890 Town Report presents the following dilemma (23-24):

> Another question demands your consideration and immediate action: What shall be done with the unused school houses that are fast going to decay? Notably among these are the houses in Divs. 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16. Each of these have a pleasant school room and some time may be needed for use, but, unpainted as they are, and exposed to the elements and other destroying agencies, will soon become valueless. We need make no suggestions in the matter, but simply bring it to your notice, trusting that you will not suffer such loss to be sustained, as will be incurred by longer neglect.

The 1891 Town Report announced that SH#12 had been sold for $75.00, "as all the lands owned by the former patrons of the school... have been sold to the proprietors of the 'Corbin Deer Park' (so called), and as it was about to be enclosed in said park" (25).

However, the number 12 was reassigned to a school known as the Red School, located on Route 120, across from Whitewater Brook Road and just above the town line with Claremont. This school appears on a 1929 US Geological Survey map:



The building was purchased from Edwin T. Ayers, “a farmer who lived near Claremont town line, by the Red School House” (Child, Vol. 2, 12). The School District Treasurer’s Report in the 1893 Town Report indicates that the Red School building was moved and renovated for a total of $300.03 (see the section entitled “To expenses of repairs on the school house in Dis. No. 12” on page 24).

This school is listed as open in the Town Reports from 1893 to 1901, and then again from 1906 to 1915. During the first period, the school typically ran one or two terms per year with enrollments of between 8 and 12 pupils. The last three years were atypical; in 1899 three terms of 10 weeks each were run with enrollments that had suddenly doubled to 23, 20, and 17 pupils. During the two years following this unexplained surge, the school went into an equally unexplained decline with two terms with 10 pupils each (1900 Town Report), and then a single term with just 6 students (1901 Town Report). The school then went dark for four years.

The situation turned around four years later when the 1906 Town Report announced that the “division 12 house has had a new table and blackboard. This house should be painted on the outside another year, and on the inside as soon as possible. It also needs a new stove and floor” (30). The 1907 Town Report followed up with more good news: “We have... painted outside and inside, papered and whitewashed the house in division 12, making it one of the most attractive school rooms in the town” (27). From 1906 to 1913 a pretty steady pattern of offering three terms per year with enrollments from 8 to 16 pupils took hold. However, the 1914 Town Report recorded only two terms with 7 and 8 pupils, and the 1915 Town Report contained the final entry for the Red School: two terms with 5 pupils each.

The 1928 Town report listed the sale of the Red School to Kenneth T. Hunt on May 2, 1927 for $65.

According to the previously mentioned Dwight Wood letter, the building “right at the town line with Claremont on Route 120... was moved in the 1920s or 30s to Claremont, just north of the Claremont hospital” (from July 8, 2016 CHS recording "One Room Schoolhouses").

Schoolhouse No. 13

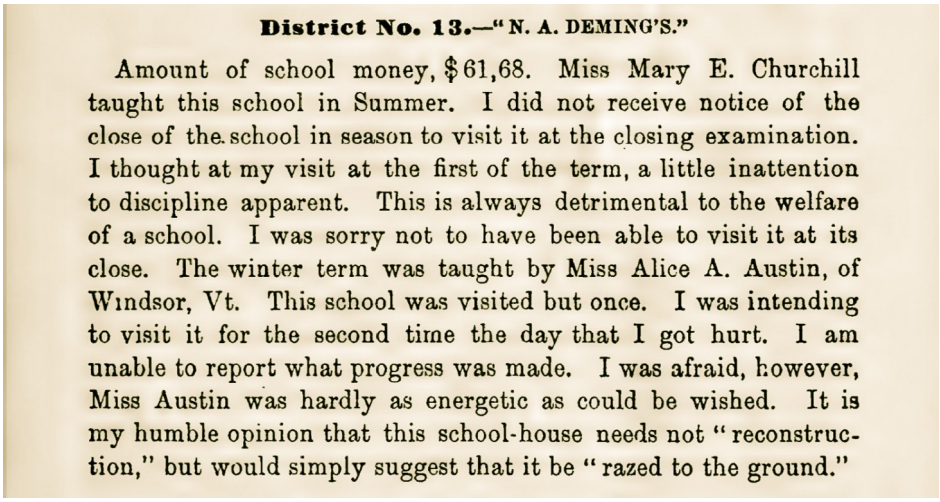
a.k.a. N. A. Deming’s, Lyman Fitch’s, Hilliard, Brick.

Located on Jackson Road west of Ironwood Drive, the property is locally renowned for its yearly Christmas display.

“This brick schoolhouse was located on Jackson Road and has been converted into a dwelling” (S. P. Tracy).

Left: 2025 photo Right: 2012 photo

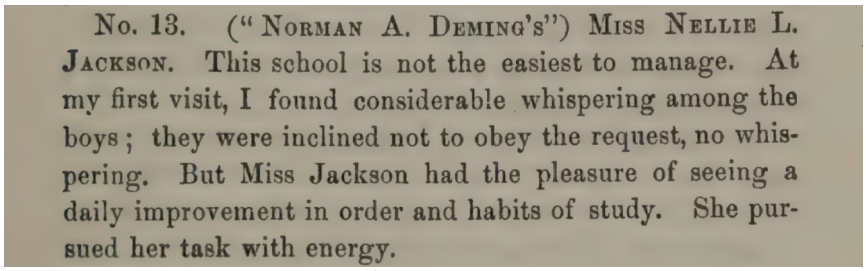
The 1853 Town Report shows that 16 pupils were enrolled (third smallest school in town), a single 12 week term was offered, and the teacher was Sarah Wyman ($9.00 monthly wage). Superintendent Henry M. Day offered the following perspective in the 1870 Town Report (21):



District No. 13.—"N. A. DEMING'S."

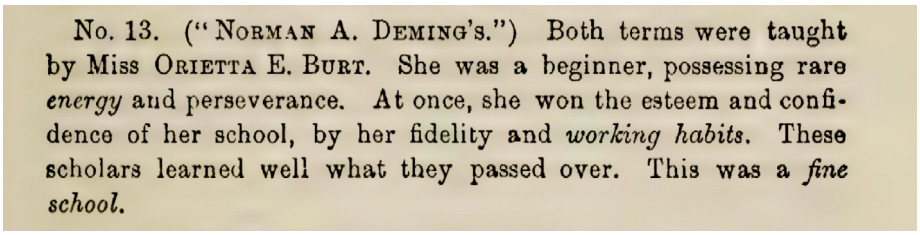
Amount of school money, $61,68. Miss Mary E. Churchill taught this school in Summer. I did not receive notice of the close of the school in season to visit it at the closing examination. I thought at my visit at the first of the term, a little inattention to discipline apparent. This is always detrimental to the welfare of a school. I was sorry not to have been able to visit it at its close. The winter term was taught by Miss Alice A. Austin, of Windsor, Vt. This school was visited but once. I was intending to visit it for the second time the day that I got hurt. I am unable to report what progress was made. I was afraid, however, Miss Austin was hardly as energetic as could be wished. It is my humble opinion that this school-house needs not "reconstruction," but would simply suggest that it be "razed to the ground."

Some teachers had an easier time managing SH#13 than others, for example:



No. 13. ("NORMAN A. DEMING'S") MISS NELLIE L. JACKSON. This school is not the easiest to manage. At my first visit, I found considerable whispering among the boys; they were inclined not to obey the request, no whispering. But Miss Jackson had the pleasure of seeing a daily improvement in order and habits of study. She pursued her task with energy.

(Superintendent James T. Jackson, 1876 Town Report, 21)



No. 13. ("NORMAN A. DEMING'S.") Both terms were taught by Miss ORIETTA E. BURT. She was a beginner, possessing rare *energy* and perseverance. At once, she won the esteem and confidence of her school, by her fidelity and *working habits*. These scholars learned well what they passed over. This was a *fine school*.

(Superintendent James T. Jackson, 1878 Town Report, 21)

One constant pattern with SH#13, however, was that enrollment was persistently on the low side over the entire the course of its existence. Indeed, the school was frequently closed. The Town Reports from the following years listed it as such: 1887-1890, 1894, 1897, 1899-1904, 1921, 1929. Indeed, in the 1929 Town Report, Superintendent Andrew P. Averill wrote that "owing to the small prospective membership at the Brick School and at No. 14* the State Board declined to continue state aid for the maintenance of these schools. The local school board therefore voted to discontinue the schools" (48).

Brick School pupils were sent to the South Cornish School and SH#14* children went to the Flat School. Apparently a last ditch effort was then made to keep the Brick School going for two more years, but the 1930 and 1931 Town Reports were the last to ever list Brick as open.

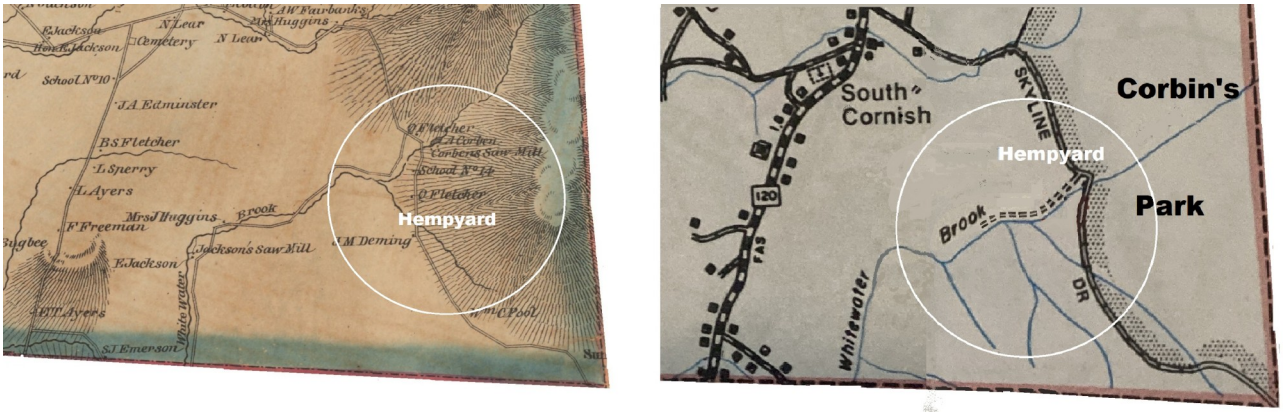
(*NOTE: The No. 14 here refers to the Texas School, not the Hempyard School. See the entry for Schoolhouse No. 16)

Schoolhouse No. 14

a.k.a. Hempyard (and later, Texas in its second incarnation, see the SH#16 entry).

Located in the southeast corner of Cornish, close to the Corbin Park fence, on the Class VI portion of Skyline Drive, past the Whitewater Brook trail that leads to the Claremont reservoir, Hempyard was a small and remote neighborhood. All that remains of it today is a handful of cellar holes, the ruins of a mill, and the possible remnants of SH#14, spread out along a stretch of Class VI road in the woods.

“This school was located in the 'Hempyard' adjacent to Corbin's Park on what is now known as Skyline Drive. It is no longer standing" (S. P. Tracy).



Left: map from the mid 19th century showing four houses, one mill, and school #14 in the Hempyard area;
Right: map from the late 20th century, showing no standing structures at all in that same area

Stones at possible SH#14 site, 2025

Cellar hole of one of the houses, 2025

SH#14 Hempyard may have had the most checkered existence of all the Cornish one-room schools. The 1853 Town Report placed SH#14 in the bottom four in terms of enrollment (13 pupils), essentially tying with SH#5 Johnson's (12 pupils), SH#12 Poppy Squash (14 pupils), and SH#14 Roots (closed). SH#14 ran a single 7 week term, compared to a single 15 week term at SH#5 and two terms of 6 and 8 weeks at SH#12.

Alvah Spaulding and William Balloch, the Superintending School Committee, wrote that SH#14, along with SH#1, 11, and 13 had "made some improvement, but not that degree of improvement which it is desirable every school should make. There seemed to be too little interest on the part of the scholars in the studies pursued" (1856 Town Report, 10).

In contrast, two years later, Superintendent William Balloch pronounced himself quite satisfied with the performance of SH#14: the teacher, Miss Martha J. Wilmarth of Newport, "happily blended all the qualities of a successful teacher. Mild, but strict in discipline, pleasant and easy in communicating her ideas to others, thorough and persevering in her instruction, it is not strange that her scholars made rapid progress. The closing examination was entirely satisfactory" (1858 Town Report, 7).

Still, enrollment remained low, for example: 11 pupils in a single term of 14 weeks (1858), 6 and 7 pupils in two terms of 6 and 7 weeks (1864), no school in 1870 when Superintendent Henty M. Day wrote that "there has been no school in this district the last year. My understanding is that there has been no organization there" (1870 Town Report, 21). In fact, there was to be no school at Hempyard through 1879. No explanation regarding this decade-long closure is offered in any of the Town Reports.

By the 1880 Town Report SH #14 had finally reopened to the following pithy review by Superintendent Emily Levitt : "One term of 8 weeks by Miss Lizzie M. Jackson. The school was so small that it was impossible for any teacher to do much, but from what I saw I should think Miss J. would make a nice teacher" (22). The following year, Superintendent M. W. Day griped that in SH#14 "$54 school money has been expended for three children. These results are hardly in keeping with our notions of equal rights... I only urge that the matter be taken into serious consideration" (13).

Five years later Superintendent George Deming observed that "the school consisted of two scholars, with an occasional day's presence of one or two more. I found Miss Sherburne doing her best, but how can anyone arouse much interest in so small a school" (1885 Town Report, 22). A more positive view of the low enrollments at SH#14 was offered in the 1888 Town Report by the newly established School Board (Chester Pike, Herbert Deming, W. H. Child): "This is the smallest school in the district, numbering but three in summer and five in fall. Yet we are impressed that the advantages to the scholars are, in many respects, superior to those of large schools" (27).

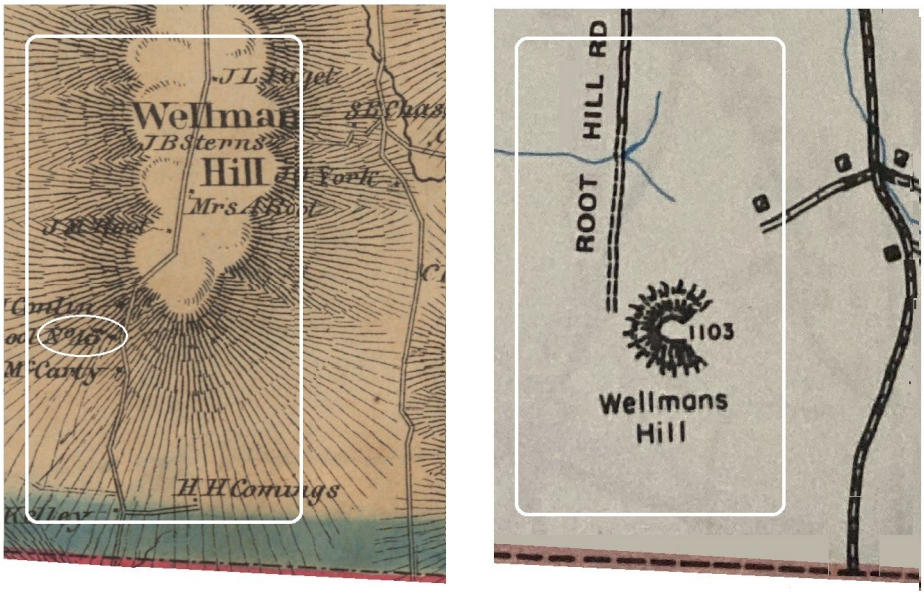
Nevertheless, Hempyard was listed as open for the last time in the 1893 Town Report, and was eventually sold off for $3.00 (1899 Town Report, 33). Some years later, the number 14 was reassigned to the Texas School (see the Schoolhouse No. 16 entry).

Schoolhouse No. 15

a.k.a. Root's, Conlin's.

Like SH#14, SH#15 was located in a remote area of the town which today comprises the Cornish Town Forest, the abutting Lipfert Forest (private but open to hikers), and other properties which together amount to over 1000 acres of undeveloped land. A few cellar holes and stone walls are the only remains of the Root Hill community whose children once attended SH#15.

“This school was located south of Wellman's Hill and not far from the Claremont line. The road serving this school has long been discontinued but was a continuation of what is now Root Hill Road. It is no longer standing" (S. P. Tracy).



Left: mid 19th century map shows several houses and school #15 on Root Hill Road
Right: late 20th century map shows no standing structures on that portion of Root Hill Road, and half as much road

Remains of Schoolhouse No. 15 on Root Hill Road, 2024 photo by Bill Lipfert

SH#15 would be the second candidate for the coveted "Cornish schoolhouse with the most checkered history" title. Indeed, in the 1853 report, it was the only one of the sixteen schools to be closed. As Superintendent Alvah Spaulding explained: “This is a very small District. It contains only 3 or 4 families, and in those families are only 3 or 4 children of suitable age to attend school, and these have attended school in District 1. It would evidently be better for this District to be united with some other” (6). Superintendent Henry M. Day concurred in the 1871 Town Report: "I think this school should be annexed to District No. 1" (17).

Almost a decade later, Superintendent Elihu H. Pike observed that "the amount of money assigned to this district is so meagre that no school has been taught during the year" (1862 Town Report, 20). Indeed, from 1853 to 1886, when SH#15 was last reported open, the school was closed ten times. During the 23 years when the school did run, only one term per year was ever offered, and with rare exceptions that single term was just 5 to 8 weeks long. As for enrollment during those years, it ranged from 2 to 16 pupils. On the topic

of funding at SH#15, as Superintendent Henry M. Day stated in the 1871 Town Report, "the average amount of money will be seen to be very small" (17). In fact, the following year provided a particularly stark illustration of this: SH#15 spent an average of $2.13 per pupil, the lowest in town. In contrast, SH#4 Dingleton spent an average of $11.13 per pupil - the highest in town (1872 Town Report, 5 and 7).

Superintendent reports over the years illustrate aspects of the SH#15 experience:

- "A fall term was taught by Ellen J. Balloch. This district has had no school for the past two or three years, and I expected to find the school very backward, but was much surprised to find it nearly on a par with other schools throughout the town. I visited the school but once, soon after it commenced. Miss B. was then getting along with her pupils very pleasantly, seemingly as if she was accustomed to the business of teaching, this being her first attempt. I failed to visit the school at the close, but have reason to think it closed with credit to teacher and scholars" (Geo. W. Hunt, 1866 Town Report, 15). As Bill Lipfert points out in an April 2, 2004 facebook posting, Ellen Balloch was born in 1849 and would have started teaching at SH#15 at the age of about 17.
- "But one term of eight weeks was taught, and two of the scholars were so often absent, that their attendance amounted to but 24 and 27 days respectively. The law compelling attendance would have been enforced, had the facts been known before the close of school. Miss Pope is well knowm in this district, and performed her work with satisfactory results. These scholars deserve a longer school (C. M. Palmer, 1873 Town Report, 19).
- "They are average scholars in this district. I asked them where they learned to read and spell? Where they learned Arithmetic and Geography? Their answer was, At home. 'Where there is a will, there is a way'" (James T. Jackson, 1876 Town Report, 21).
- "Being absent, I failed to visit this school. Doubtless the teacher and scholars did credit to themselves" (James T. Jackson, 1877 Town Report, 21).
- "Here Miss Lillian E. York taught her first term. The order was good. Teacher and scholars busy. Fair progress" (James T. Jackson, 1878 Town Report, 21).
- "In an old school-house, with only two scholars that could hardly find shelter from a shower, I found Miss Conlin giving her first instructions. The scholars said they were trying to learn. I was not informed of the close of school, but I think it was satisfactory" (Herbert Deming, 1883 Town Report, 17).
- "Length of school, 4 weeks; number of scholars, 3; average daily attendance, 3: taught by Kate Conlin, with the same quiet, earnest work which she has exhibited toward her little charges past" (G. L. Deming, 1886 Town Report, 19).

There is no record of any school being held at SH#15 after 1886.

Interestingly, in its last four years SH#15 seemed to be very much of a family affair. John Conlin was the Prudential Committee, his daughter Kate Conlin was the teacher, and Charlie and Johnnie Conlin (exact relationship unknown) regularly appeared on the roll of honor which listed "pupils who have been present every half day of a term without being tardy." The only other student to make the honor roll was a Mary Patten in 1883. The total enrollment during this period was 2 (1883), 4 (1884 and 1885), and 3 (1886). As Bill Lipfert put it, "this sounds like a home schooling situation but using the little school house on Root Hill Road."

Schoolhouse No. 16 (later changed to No. 14)

a.k.a. Texas.

In 1844 an area on the west side of Grantham mountain that was part of the Town of Grantham was annexed into the Town of Cornish. This area came to be referred to as "Texas" whose annexation occurred in 1845. The school was located at the eastern end of a now abandoned road that ran from the stone house at 247 Burr Road to Leavitt Hill Road.

“This schoolhouse was located in the "Texas" area adjacent to the Burr Road. It is no longer standing" (S. P. Tracy).

Left: undated photo

Right: SH#15 site, 2025

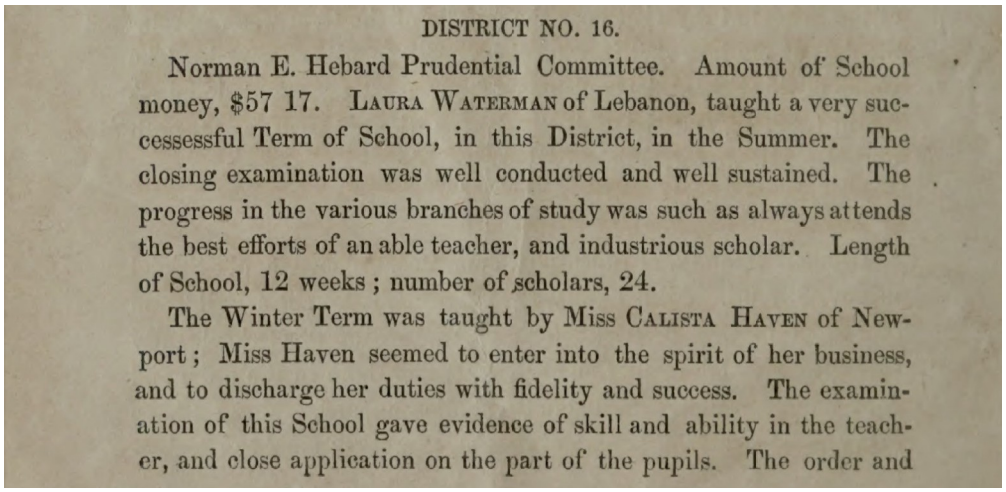
"Texas I" (from approx. 1844 to 1887) - District No. 16

In 1853, SH#16 offered two terms of instruction of 7 and 11 weeks, with enrollments of 14 and 15 pupils.

Five years later, Superintendent William Balloch considered the building to be "very comfortable but entirely too small" (1858 Town Report, 8). He also gave Texas a generally favorable review (7):

District No. 16.—Prudential Committee, OLIVER BURR. Amount of school money, $59,88; contributed, $40,00. Number of scholars in summer, 23; in winter, 30. The summer term, of 12 weeks, was taught by Miss ELVIRA L. BRYANT, of Cornish. The teacher was quite young. The discipline was not quite as strict as it should have been, yet the scholars made commendable improvement. On the whole, the School was a profitable one. The winter term was under the instruction of Miss LAURA J. MARTINDALE, of Cornish, and continued 16 weeks. It will be sufficient to say of this School, that the teacher fully sustained her former reputation. The scholars made fine improvement.

Superintendent A. G. Vinton was positively gushing in his evaluation (1860 Town Report, 14-15):

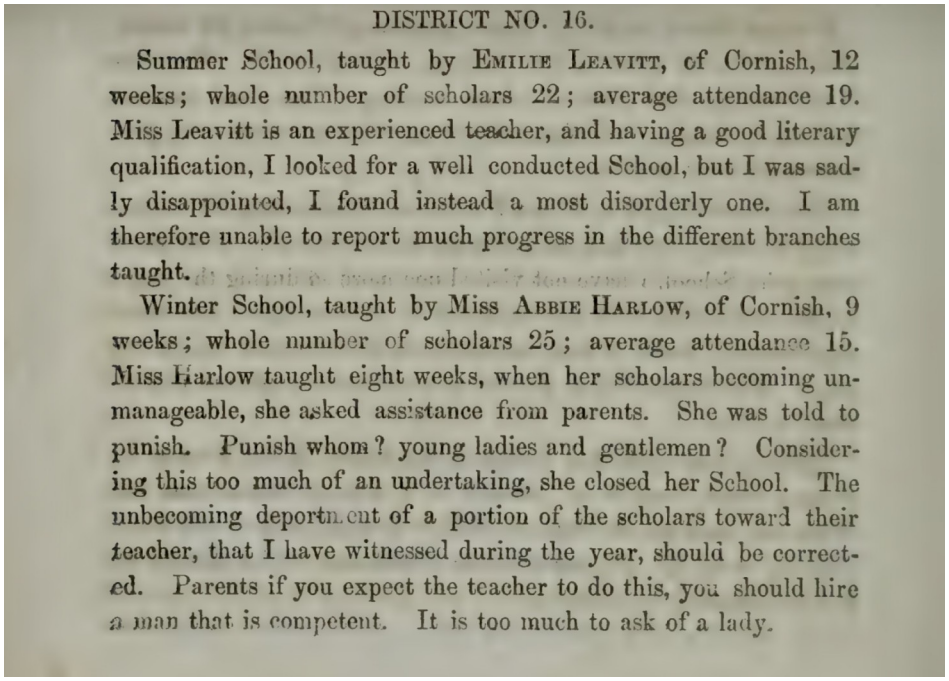


DISTRICT NO. 16.

Norman E. Hebard Prudential Committee. Amount of School money, $57 17. Laura Waterman of Lebanon, taught a very successful Term of School, in this District, in the Summer. The closing examination was well conducted and well sustained. The progress in the various branches of study was such as always attends the best efforts of an able teacher, and industrious scholar. Length of School, 12 weeks; number of scholars, 24.

The Winter Term was taught by Miss Calista Haven of Newport; Miss Haven seemed to enter into the spirit of her business, and to discharge her duties with fidelity and success. The examination of this School gave evidence of skill and ability in the teacher, and close application on the part of the pupils. The order and

However, Superintendent Elihu H. Pike's evaluation in the 1862 Town Report (20) struck a different note:



DISTRICT NO. 16.

Summer School, taught by Emilie Leavitt, of Cornish, 12 weeks; whole number of scholars 22; average attendance 19. Miss Leavitt is an experienced teacher, and having a good literary qualification, I looked for a well conducted School, but I was sadly disappointed, I found instead a most disorderly one. I am therefore unable to report much progress in the different branches taught.

Winter School, taught by Miss Abbie Harlow, of Cornish, 9 weeks; whole number of scholars 25; average attendance 15. Miss Harlow taught eight weeks, when her scholars becoming unmanageable, she asked assistance from parents. She was told to punish. Punish whom? young ladies and gentlemen? Considering this too much of an undertaking, she closed her School. The unbecoming deportment of a portion of the scholars toward their teacher, that I have witnessed during the year, should be corrected. Parents if you expect the teacher to do this, you should hire a man that is competent. It is too much to ask of a lady.

Still, on balance, most of the reports by the Superintendents lauded the quality of the education that was dispensed at the Texas School. Enrollment held steady, roughly within a 15-28 range, almost every year through the early 1870s. Texas remained open from 1853 to 1886, and always ran two terms, with just three exceptions through 1878. The terms were usually of a 10-12 week duration. By the mid 1870s, enrollment was dropping, and the frequency of single term school years increased. The 1886 report struck a premonitory chord: "The school appeared well in the summer, but dwindled away for some unknown reason in the fall" (G. L. Deming, 1886 Town Report, 19).Indeed, 1887 would be the last year for Texas I, with one 9 week term attended by 11 students.

"Texas II" (1912-1920 and 1926-1928) - Division 14

The 1912 Town Report contained the following anouncement from School Board members Herbert Deming, Eben M. Johnson, and George D. Austin: "A new house has been built in the northeasterly part of the town now making fourteen houses in all" (34). Total cost: $493.17 (41). The school retained its name, Texas, but was assigned the number 14. That year, Cora Waterman taught a single 14 week term to 8 students.

The School Reports within the Town Reports no longer contained individual evaluations of the various schools, so that only basic statistical information is available for Texas II: in 1914, two terms per school year were offered, and from 1914 to 1920 three terms were offered, except in 1911 when only a single 11 week term was held. Typically, when three terms were run, two were longer (10-14 weeks) and the third was shorter (6-10 weeks). Enrollment was between 10 and 14 pupils throughout.

Texas then closed for six years and reopened for a final three year period (1926-1928) during which it enrolled 9, 12, and 8 students (at this point headcounts are for the entire school year).

As already mentioned in the SH#13 (Brick) section, the 1929 Town Report announced the demise of Texas (and Brick) as follows (48):

Owing to the small prospective membership at the Brick school and at No. 14 the State Board declined to continue state aid for the maintenance of those schools. The local school board therefore voted to discontinue the schools. They arranged for the transfer of the pupils of No. 14 to the Cornish Flat school, and for the transfer of the Brick School children to the school at South Cornish.

The 1933 Town Report (82) recorded the sale of Texas for $60.

Recapitulation: The ~~Sixteen~~ Seventeen One-Room Schoolhouses of Cornish

Town Reports through 1869 only referred to the schools by their District numbers. The 1870 report was the first to also use the schools' names, and these appear in the table below. For the schools that either lasted until 1954 and/or are still standing today, the names by which they were last known are given in parentheses.

The first eleven schools (which encompassed the whole town) survived until 1916 when #5 ceased to function. By 1937 four more (#2, #4, #8, and #9) closed. There are nine currently existing structures, eight of which were among the first eleven schools, : both #1 buildings (the Woolhouse, the Masonic Hall), and buildings #3, #6, #7, #9, #10, and #11. Only one building, #13, remains from the “last five" schools (the later districts that were formed by subdividing some of the first eleven).

School	Open through 1954	Still standing in 2026
1. Balloch's (Chadbourne)	X	X (private home)
2. Above the Bridge		
3. Stephen A. Tracy's (Tracy)	X	X (private home)
4. Dingleton		
5. Capt. Seth Johnson's		
6. Flatt (Flat): The Woolhouse		X (private home)
Masonic Hall	X	X (Masonic Hall)
7. Center (Center)	X	X (private home)
8. Goward's		
9. Town House (Little Town Hall)		X (town property)
10. Edminster (South)	X	X (private home)
11. City (City)	X	X (private home)
12. Poppysquash		
13. N. A. Deming's (Brick)		X (private home)
14. Hempyard		
15. John M. Root's		
16. Texas*		
17. Red School**		

* When Texas was rebuilt in 1912, it retained its name but received a new number, no. 14.

** When Red School was established, it was assigned the number 12. This was the former number for Poppysquash which had closed, but Red School was sited several miles away and was by no means a relocation and/or rebuilding of Poppysquash. In contrast, when #6 moved in Cornish Flat from the building that became the Woolhouse to a new building (today's Masonic Hall), this was a clear instance of the relocation of the Flat School to a nearby site. The same is true of #10's move from the intersection of Route 120 and Edminster Road to a new building a few hundred feet away also on Route 120. Thus, while 17 schoolhouses never did exist simultaneously, 17 different schoolhouses did stand at different times in distinct locations throughout the Town of Cornish.

A FEW MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. True Tales of the One-Room Schools

Judy Rook: Chewing Gum Rebellion (CHS Video)

I had Mrs. Kidder as a teacher when I was in grade school, and I remember one episode when I was in second or third grade when I know Mrs. Kidder did not want to see the superintendent show up. She may remember this, I'm not sure. You couldn't chew gum in school and if you were chewing gum she would always say "If you don't have enough for everybody, you have to throw your gum away." Of course, most of us never had enough for everybody. Well, I happened to have an uncle that owned a grocery wholesale business and he brought us a case of gum on a Sunday. So my brother, being the redhead that he is, brought enough gum for everybody and he sat and chewed - oh, she should have known better - but he chewed it like "Look at me Mrs. Kidder, I am chewing gum." And sure enough she said, "Loren if you don't have enough gum for everybody you have to throw it away." Well he grinned and he got his box of gum out and he handed her the first piece and everybody else in the room a piece. Later she told my mother that, never again did she say that sentence.

Bernice Johnson: Wearing Ankle Socks to School in the Depth of Winter (CHS Video)

My grandmother lived with us when I was growing up here and also a school teacher lived at our home so we had to be pretty good of course. We had to behave ourselves, and my grandmother was very strict. She was a very religious woman. We had to go to church every Sunday unless we were really sick, whether it was with a sleigh, or walking, or whatever, and my grandmother believed in proper dress. The girls couldn't wear slacks to school. They may have worn ski pants underneath but they had to have a dress on too, and we had to have long stockings and boots in the winter of course. And a lot of the girls that came to school, as I got up in the fifth or sixth grade, the girls would wear ankle socks and I wanted so badly to wear ankle socks like all the other girls but do you think my grandmother would let me? No, no - stockings had to be worn underneath with an elastic to hold them. So she used to go to visit her son Frank Fitch in Athens, Georgia in the winter and she'd be gone maybe two months. So when she was gone in the cold wintertime, when the snow was high, I wore ankle socks.

Daisy Yatsevitch: The Hat in the Outhouse (CHS Video)

I had a brand new snow suit that winter and it had a hat that kind of clamped onto my head, you know, and we had an outhouse that was the sanitary facility at the one-room school, and I remember I had to go. I put on my snow suit and I accidentally dropped my hat down in the toilet, and I was just mortified and so upset that I didn't dare to tell anybody. You know, when you're six years old or seven years old, those things are major. When my mother came to pick me up, I just burst into tears. She said, "What in the world is the matter?" "I dropped my hat in the outhouse," and thinking it was so bad because it was a brand new snowsuit and anything brand new was very special in those days

because mostly you got hand-me-downs. She kind of half laughed and said, "It's alright, we'll take care of it" and she went in and told Mrs. Bernard. Mrs. Bernard sent Stuart out to the outhouse with a hanger and he got it out. We brought it home, my mother washed it, and I got to wear it again!

Five from Fred Sullivan (CHS Video and interview with Ginny Gage and Mark Patkowski)

Gluing Teacher to her Seat

I'll tell you a story about the South Cornish School. We had a boy that acted up an awful lot. His name was Charlie Bannister. One day, Mrs. Kidder went out to get some wood to put into the stove, and while she was gone Charlie snuck up and put some glue in her seat. The teacher came back and sat down in that seat. She sat there for about half an hour. Charlie figured the glue must have set, and he started raising the devil in the back of the room. She jumped up, tore the back of her dress right off. Didn't phase her one bit. She just reached back in the drawer, pulled out a skein of clothesline, then went to the back and she tied Charlie right to that chair, the whole skein went round and round, and he spent the rest of the day right in that seat.

They Called Me "Barnyard"

I started my eighth grade, (due to overcrowding in Cornish) at the Junior High in Claremont. From being in a school that probably had 15-20 kids in it, I went to a class of a hundred. I tell you, I was one scared kid. Us (Cornish) kids were all farmboys, farmgirls. We never took a bath before we went to school. We had barnyard chores. Everybody had chores first thing in the morning. And in school we all smelled the same. So in my eighth grade class at Claremont Junior High School, my name was "Barnyard."

Cherry Bombing the School Bus

My grandparents had come back from Florida that year and brought fireworks back with them. And my father said, "These fireworks are going up in the cupboard and you kids aren't touching them. If you want them touched off, you come get me and we'll touch them off." Well, I could open that cupboard and see the fireworks up there and there was one that we call cherry bombs. Yeah. With that big wick in the middle. I had to show Harold Morse that. So I took it out and I showed him.

Harold says, "When are we going to touch it off?"

I said, "We can't touch it off. My father would whip me if I did that."

Harold, "Wait till we come home. When you almost get to your turn-off down by the main road, we'll touch it off then and scare some of the kids walking in back of the bus."

Me, "How is this going to work?"

Harold, "The handle right in the back of the bus that says 'do not touch' opens that door. And about the time the kids are walking behind the bus, I'll light it, you throw it out the door."

Well, he lit it and it went under the seat instead of going out the door. And the bus driver hollers "Shut that door!" because a light comes on down in front of the bus. So I slammed that door. That cherry bomb went off inside of the bus. And I tell you, all the girls saw me and said, “Sullivan did it.” Kenneth Hunt was the driver: “Sullivan, out!” So I went down, got out. I walked out of the bus. And who's behind the bus? My father. He just happened to be along. Oh, boy. He said to me, “here's my jackknife, cut the size switch you want, and I'll meet you at home." And he'd go half a mile home, stop, and wait for me to go by. Yes, he used a switch on me. And he should have. I can't remember a time when I got spanked that I shouldn't have.

Let's Smoke Out the School - They'll Never Know Who Done It

On one snowy sticky day the teacher let us out, and Harold says, "You know, if we can get up on that roof and drop a snowball down that chimney, the smoke would all go into that school. Then we can get down and get back into the school. Nobody would ever know who did it." Well, teacher found out...

Or We Could Just Steam Out the School

One spring when it was sugaring time, the teacher told me and Harold that we could show how to do maple sugar for a project. There were a few big maples around the school, so we tapped them and boiled syrup on the wood stove that was in there. We got it roaring pretty good, and it was boiling pretty good, and everything got so steamed up that we had to finish the class outdoors.

2. Who Carved the Initials CTH into the Top of a School Desk in 1907?

The desk is shown above, with two close-ups of the carved initials. The second close-up has been digitally enhanced to highlight the initials and date.

This desk resided in the barn of Bill and Elizabeth Caterino at 59 Tifft Road for decades. The nearest school would have been the Goward School, straight down the abandoned road from 59 Tifft to 488 East Road, from which the school site is approximately 100 feet away. One's first instinct might well be to assume that the desk came from there. The next two nearby schools, both located between one and two miles away, would be the Flat School, and the South School.

A search through the genealogical data presented in the Child, Rawson, and Wade volumes yielded four "CTH names": Charles Hurley (1838-1851 - middle initial unknown)
Charles Torrey Hardy (1866-1885)
Charles Tyler Huggins (1855-1936)
Cyril Thomas Hunt (1896-1919)

The first two clearly weren't in school in 1907. The third would have been 52 years old in 1907. This leaves Cyril Thomas Hunt as the sole plausible candidate based on the available genealogical evidence. He would have been 11 years old in 1907. Are any further clues available?

Cyril Thomas Hunt does appear on the 1903 "roll of perfect attendance" for Division 6 (Flat), as well as on the 1906, 1908, 1910, and 1911 rolls of perfect attendance, although division information is not provided in the Town Reports after 1904.

Cyril Thomas Hunt died tragically young in 1919. He had enlisted in the U.S. Airforce in 1917, but was listed as "killed in an airplane accident" on January 27, 1919 (1919 Town Report, 50).

One hesitates to cast a shadow on the legacy of a young man with such a fine scholastic and patriotic record; perhaps this investigation is flawed and its conclusion unsound. Or perhaps this act of wanton defacement of school property, if Cyril Thomas Hunt did indeed commit it, should just be considered as a very minor blemish in an otherwise highly laudable, but sadly short, life.

3. Supervision of the Teaching Staff

There are frequent references to the need for careful selection and supervision of teachers. For example, in his 1853 report, superintendent Alvah Spaulding wrote that "Teachers, before entering their schools, were examined and qualified. Their examination was generally well sustained, and with credit to themselves. The expectation which was thus awakened has been fully answered, except in two or three instances" (8). Similarly, Alvah Spaulding and William Balloch wrote in their 1856 report that "The town has been favored with a good board of teachers... They appeared, most of them, to be well instructed in the different branches of Common School Education, and the methods of teaching, and governing a school. But... some were not as thoroughly acquainted with English Grammar and all parts of it, as it is important and desirable that they should be" (8). Other

requirements for teaching included American citizenship, and evidence of good moral character. Eventually, teachers were also required to pass an examination in "Physiology and Hygiene with special reference to the effects of alcoholic drinks, stimulants and narcotics upon the human system" (1884 Town Report, 15).

However, the Cornish Town Reports provide no examples of actual teacher examinations. Fortunately, one such example dating to 1876, from the neighboring town of Croydon, was found in the 1876 New Hampshire Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Undoubtedly, every reader of this text would pass the Croydon teacher test with flying colors. Go on, try it!

CROYDON.—HUBBARD A. BARTON.

EXAMINATION OF TEACHERS.

In examining teachers, the method of written examinations has in part been practised. Aside from the usual oral examination, teachers have been required to give written answers to about twenty questions. For this purpose several sets of questions have been prepared and used during the year, of which the following is a fair sample:

ARITHMETIC. 1. What place of relative importance does arithmetic occupy, as compared with the several branches taught in the common schools? 2. Represent by figures, according to the French method, ten trillions two billions two hundred and seven millions six hundred four thousand and nine; and according to the English method, seven hundred eleven thousand seven hundred sixteen billions three hundred seventy-one thousand seven hundred twelve millions four hundred fifty-six thousand seven hundred and eleven. 3. Give each method by which addition may be proved. 4. State the principles upon which the process of subtraction is based. 5. Explain the points of difference between the numerator and denominator in common fractions. 6. *(a)* What is the value of $\frac{63 \cdot 9}{1 \cdot 3}$? *(b)* If a bushel of wheat cost $1.92, what will 1 peck 4 quarts cost? 7. *(a)* How is the unit divided in decimal fractions? *(b)* Divide three hundred seventy-five hundred thousandths by one hundred twenty-five thousandths. 8. Suppose a note of $1.25 were given November 1, 1875, what would be the amount of interest due October 15, 1876, at five per cent.? 9. What is discount, commission, present worth, proportion, banking, partnership? 10. What is the combined length of the base and perpendicular of the largest right-angled triangle that

can be inscribed in a square field of ten acres? Draw figures to illustrate, and give reasons for each step.

GRAMMAR. 1. What is grammar? 2. Into what four general divisions is grammar usually divided? 3. Give the parts of speech, and state the office that each performs. 4. Give an example of a transitive verb in the active voice, and show how it may be changed to the passive voice. 5. *(a)* Compose a simple sentence containing two clauses, each with a subject and predicate expressed. *(b)* Is such a sentence as this question implies denominated *simple* by all grammars? 6. Compose a compound sentence of two members, containing a proper noun in the nominative case, an intransitive verb, a descriptive adjective, and a common noun in the objective case. 7. Explain the difference between a member and a clause. 8. Analyze these sentences, and parse each word: "We must see with our own eyes." "Hurrah for the boys of '76!" 9. Of what does syntax treat? 10. Correct these sentences: It may not have been her. The general bid the intruders to depart from within the lines. She smiles at all who profess to be enamoured of her. I will divide the residue of my property between my three sons.

4. On "Whispering"

The Town Reports of the 1800s contain numerous references to the evils of whispering. Here are some examples:

- In some schools no communication by whispering and other ways has been practiced, except by the express permission of the teacher. Several scholars have seldom if ever violated this wholesome regulation. It is a regulation that should be adopted and faithfully observed by every school (1853, 9-10).
- There was too much whispering and noise for the School to appear to the best advantage (1861, 13).
- An entire freedom from whispering and other communication would have been an additional excellence (1873, 15).
- A little more studiousness and less whispering would have given the school a better appearance (1885, 19).
- Each scholar has a book by himself necessary to reap the best advantages of school, instead of two or three looking over together as has often been seen in some of our schools, tempting whispering and other mischief (1891, 23-24).

No complaints regarding this dreaded vice were voiced in the Town reports from the 1900s. However, the notion that this concern might have lost its urgency with the passing decades was dispelled in our interview with Fred Sullivan in 2025. When the topic was raised, he responded:"Oh no, you didn't whisper. We learned awful quick, you don't whisper."

5. Private Schools in Cornish

There are several references in 19th century Town Reports to private schools being held in some of the schoolhouses through private subscriptions. This entailed either running entire "private" terms, or lengthening "regular" school terms. For example:

- In District No. 2, the Winter term was lengthened two weeks by subscription. In No. 11, the teacher has been employed to teach a Private School of four or five weeks (1865, 22).
- In District No. 9, a private school was taught for a few weeks after the close of the Summer term, by Miss Isabel Fletcher. In District No. 6 the school was lengthened 9 days by private subscription (1866, 16).
- A private school was taught in the Fall in district No. 1, by Miss Marion Westgate. It afforded great privileges to the young people of Cornish. Such schools cannot be too highly commended (1877, 22).
- Districts 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 12 and 13 lengthened their schools by furnishing board, and in District No. 3 a private school of six weeks was added to the winter term (1882, 13).
- A winter term of ten weeks (mostly private) was taught by George L. Deming of Cornish whose large experience and success as a teacher is known to all townspeople, and all concerned in this division (No. 7) were not disappointed at his marked success in this school (1889, 21).

No other details concerning these private schools are given in the Town Reports. At least one bona fide private school, established by Robert and Katherine Barrett did exist in Cornish briefly in the early 20th century, namely the "Pasture School for Outstanding Students." The Pasture School was held in a small portable building with open decking in a pasture on a high hill near Cornish Flat called Spaulding Hill. William Chadbourne, Dayton Johnson, Jack Dinkle, Lawrence Hunt, Stub Wells, and Donald Emery were all invited to attend in the year 1918-1919. The teacher was Alice Jesseman, and she instructed the students in mathematics, English, wood working, literature, and music appreciation. The school provided a two year course in one" (Windsor Chronicle, July 31, 1987, 12 in CHS Vertical File I; similar information is provided in the Rawson town history). Rose Nelson and Bernice (Fitch) Johnson briefly reminisced about this school in a December 13th, 1997

CHS video. As they recalled, the school only lasted for two or three years, and it was for troubled boys, "and uncle Louis was one of them" according to Bernice Johnson.

6. Muddling through the Final Years of the One-Room Schools

There was a certain amount of disarray during those final years, specifically with regard to student transportation and the grading of schools. A description of the bus routes in the 1947 Town Report (89), along with Leland Atwood's description of his own school bus travels in our 2015 interview illustrate the point:

Table of the 1947 School Bus Routes

	Load '46	Load '47	Miles Per Day
Bus A.			
1. Pick up South Cornish and Center Pupils	42	42	34.0 (18.5 loaded)
Bus B.			
1. Chadbourne Area to School	41	35	37.0 (12.6 loaded)
2. Get Flat Children	39	42	21.5 (8.6 loaded)
Bus C. (Small one)			
1. Take Tracy Children*	19	17	36.0 (18.0 loaded)
2. Pick up Tewksbury District	8	15	30.4 (15.2 loaded)

*A Feeder might be needed to carry any children on Dingleton to the main bus.

Leland Atwood described his school bus travels as follows:

> (To go to Tracy School which is in the northwestern part of town, from Cornish Flat which is in the northeastern part of town) we left at 7 o'clock in the morning, and we got back here at 4:30, quarter to 5 at night. We had to change buses on the route too. We got on at the store here (in the Flat) and went down the Center Road to the 12% (a store on the western edge of town). Then we went (in a southerly direction) down that road down to the Chadbourne School and at the Chadbourne School, the other bus is there. We got off and got on the other bus and we went right back up (north) past the 12% through by Blow-Me-Down Pond. We went up the back road up to Points, to the Tracy School and they dumped us off. Then at night when we come back, they picked us up at Tracy School and we got to the City School and we changed buses there, and went up Townhouse Road to 120, down to the Claremont line (at the southern edge of town), turned around and come back (north) to Cornish Flat and the bus was done.

As for the school grading issue, consider that Leland Atwood attended grades 1-2-3 at the Flat School, grades 4 and 5 at South, grade 6 at Center, grade 7 at Tracy (and grade 8 in the brand new Consolidated School). Similarly, Fred Sullivan did grades 1-3 at Flat, grades 4-5 at South, grades 6-

7 at Center, and grade 8 in Claremont. Marilyn Quimby did all her elementary schooling at South because in her younger years the school was teaching the lower grades, and in her later years, South switched to teaching the upper grades.

The following chart shows the grade distributions across the Cornish schools from 1949 to 1954 based on the Town Reports from that period (earlier Town Reports do not contain this information) and helps explain why Leland Atwood and Fred Sullivan (who completed their 8th grades in 1955 and 1953 respectively) had to do so much traveling (Marilyn Quimby completed her 8th grade in 1950):

	1949-50	1950-51	1951-52	1952-3	1953-4
Flat	1 - 4	1 - 3	1 - 2	1 - 2	1 - 2
City	1 - 3	1 - 3	1 - 3	1 - 3	1 - 2
Center	1 - 8	6 - 8	5 - 7	6 - 7	3 - 4
Tracy	1 - 8	1 - 6	2, 4, 6	1, 3, 4, 7	7
Chadbourne	4 - 8	5 - 8	5 - 8	5 - 8	5 - 6
South	4 - 8	4 - 6	3 - 5	3 - 5	4 - 5

Grades Taught in the Cornish One-Room Schools from 1949 to 1954

7. The Bobcats were Meowing and Yowling

Strictly speaking, this has nothing to do with the schools - but children back then sometimes had to walk some considerable distances to and from school or, later, to and from the bus stop. Presumably, Bernice Johnson was not the only one to experience moments such as this: "We used to be coming home from church on Sunday evening, we belonged to the Young People's Club, and we'd be walking up Harris Hill and the bobcats would be going right along the side of the road and meowing and yowling. We used to sing to scare them off" (CHS Rose Nelson Video, 1997).

8. Hiding in Plain Sight in Poppysquash?

This final note has even less to do with the schools, and is unabashedly speculative. But it does relate to the "About the Original Inhabitants" section presented earlier.

In a 1986 article about Native American population movements from the 17th to the 19th centuries, specifically in Vermont, but also involving Canada and New Hampshire, Colin Calloway argued that while many Abenakis relocated to Canada or to locations in northern Vermont and New Hampshire, many others followed a strategy of "going underground" in the face of the mounting pressures of white settlement. This strategy involved moving to "marginal areas where they lived in small groups on the edges of white settlement" (220). Furthermore, a high degree of mobility across state and national borders was maintained, "with periodic reversals in direction and persistent visitation of many former inhabitations" (222).

Margaret Bruchac, writing in 2002 about "Hiding in Plain Sight: Abenaki Persistence in Vermont," made a similar point: "Native people... learned how to live on the edges and in the midst of what white people called 'civilization'... Abenaki people were very persistent... literally hiding in plain sight" (16). Likewise, Anne Jennison in a 2024 article on the Abenaki people of New Hampshire stated that the "hiding in plain sight" strategy was used "from the late 18th century through the late 20th century in order to protect their lives, their jobs, their homes... all without their neighbors knowing their Abenaki identities."

The Speculative Proposition: Perhaps a mid-century resident of Poppysquash, Lysander Knight (or “Knights” as spelled in the 1853, 1859 and 1861 Town Reports), was “living underground/hiding in plain sight” right there.

According to Child, Lysander Knight was born in Hartland, VT circa 1800. He later married Nancy Hill of Plainfield, VT. The couple lived there until 1848, when they moved to Cornish and settled in the Poppysquash area. It is worth noting that the “History of Plainfield, VT” page on the town’s website includes the following information: “There is evidence showing that original Native people were living in what was to become the Plainfield area as late as the 1780s or 1790s.” Also, as mentioned earlier, the name Poppysquash appears to be of Indian origin, and the area was located all the way on the eastern margin of the town, at the foot of the Grantham-Croydon mountain range.

Nancy Hill died in 1868, and Lysander Knight remarried in 1869. His second wife was Mary Aldrich. According to the marriage record:

- Lysander Knight had become a resident of Lancaster, NH which was now listed as his birthplace rather than Hartland, VT.
- Mary Aldrich was a resident of Canada, but her birthplace was listed as Lancaster, NH.

However, the 1870 US census listed Mary Aldrich's birthplace as Canada. It also listed both as having “foreign born fathers.”

It is worth further noting that Lancaster is located in the northern part of Coos County, not far from the Canadian border and would have been a major hub in the network described as follows by Joseph Bruchac in a March 29, 2025 post on his Generations Blog: "Throughout the 1800s and into the 1900s, Abenaki people... maintained connections that routinely crossed state and national borders, traveling for work, joining in ceremonies, and shaping kinship connections."

Are the various inconsistencies in biographical information, and the significant geographical locations involved in this case, sufficient to argue that what we have here is an instance of “hiding in plain sight?” The reader will decide.

According to his death certificate, Lysander Knight passed away on May 11, 1884 at the Coos County Poor Farm.

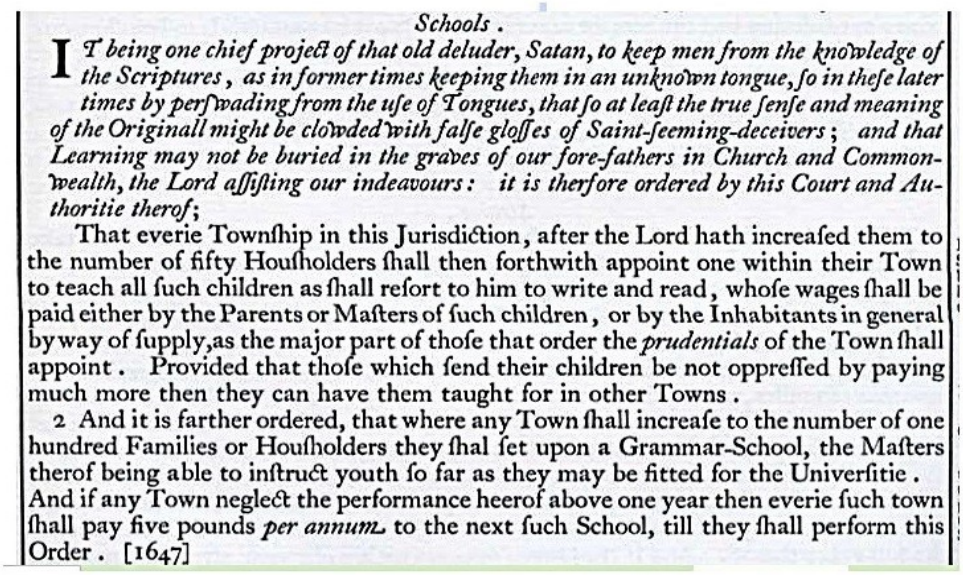
9. Opening of the New Central School

Photo from the cover of the 1955 Cornish Town Report

APPENDIX: Overview of the History of Public Schools in New Hampshire from Colonial Times through the mid-Twentieth Century

In 1640, the early settlements in what is now New Hampshire, namely Hilton Point (now Dover), Strawberry Banke (now Portsmouth), Hampton, and Exeter, had a combined estimated population of 1055 people. These communities were then being administered by the Puritan government of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, as it wasn't until 1679 that the separate Province of New Hampshire was established by King Charles II.

The Puritans held as a core belief that all members of society, both males and females, should be taught to read, because being able to read the Bible for oneself provided the means of personal salvation. In effect, teaching reading to all was a fundamental religious duty. Consequently, the Puritans passed the earliest compulsory schooling laws in our country, and 17th century New England joined the ranks of the world's most literate societies of the day. For example, the **1642 General School Law** instructed town officials to ensure that parents or guardians fulfilled their obligation to teach their children in their homes to read and to instruct them in the basic principles of religion and of the laws of the commonwealth. This law did not yet require the establishment of schools. However, the next, and most famous, of the Puritan school laws, the landmark**"Old Deluder Satan Act" of 1647** (as it is often referred to) did order towns to establish schools, a mandate that had no precedent in English law. The 1647 Act is widely considered by historians to have been the first step towards the eventual establishment of public schools across the United States.



Schools.

IT being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times keeping them in an unknown tongue, ſo in theſe later times by perſwading from the uſe of Tongues, that ſo at leaſt the true ſenſe and meaning of the Originall might be clowded with falſe gloſſes of Saint-ſeeming-deceivers; and that Learning may not be buried in the graves of our fore-fathers in Church and Commonwealth, the Lord aſſiſting our indeavours: it is therfore ordered by this Court and Authoritie therof;

That everie Townſhip in this Jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increaſed them to the number of fifty Houſholders ſhall then forthwith appoint one within their Town to teach all ſuch children as ſhall reſort to him to write and read, whoſe wages ſhall be paid either by the Parents or Maſters of ſuch children, or by the Inhabitants in general by way of ſupply, as the major part of thoſe that order the *prudentials* of the Town ſhall appoint. Provided that thoſe which ſend their children be not oppreſſed by paying much more then they can have them taught for in other Towns.

2 And it is farther ordered, that where any Town ſhall increaſe to the number of one hundred Families or Houſholders they ſhal ſet upon a Grammar-School, the Maſters therof being able to inſtruct youth ſo far as they may be fitted for the Univerſitie. And if any Town neglect the performance heerof above one year then everie ſuch town ſhall pay five pounds *per annum* to the next ſuch School, till they ſhall perform this Order. [1647]

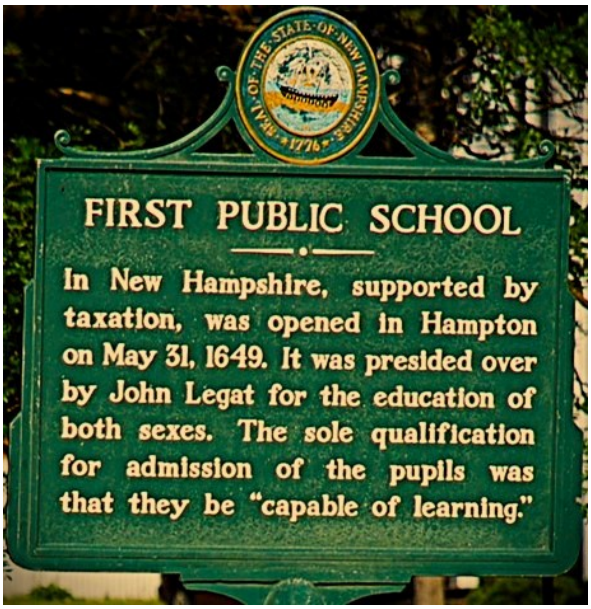
(It being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the scriptures, as in former times keeping them in an unknown tongue, so in these later times by persuading them from the use of tongues, that so at least the true sense and meaning of the original might be clouded with false glosses of saintly-seeming deceivers; and that learning may not be buried in the graves of our forefathers in Church and Commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavors; it is therefore ordered by this court and authorities thereof;

That every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord has increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read, whose wages shall be paid either by the parents or masters of such children, or by the inhabitants in general by way of supply, as the major part of those that order the prudentials of the town shall appoint. Provided that those who send their children be not oppressed by paying much more than they can have them taught for in other towns.

And it is further ordered, that where any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families or householders they shall set up a grammar school, the masters thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university. And if any town neglect the performance hereof above one year then every such town shall pay five pounds per annum to the next such school, till they shall perform this order.)

Plainly stated, the act required towns with at least 50 households to hire a reading and writing teacher, and towns with at least 100 households to establish a grammar school (also referred to as a Latin school, in today's terms roughly a secondary school). The act also stated that teacher wages were to be paid by the parents or the town, and that failure to comply was to result in a yearly five pound fine.

Within two years of the enactment of the Old Deluder Satan Act, the town of Hampton had opened the first public school in what would later become the Province and, eventually, the State of New Hampshire.

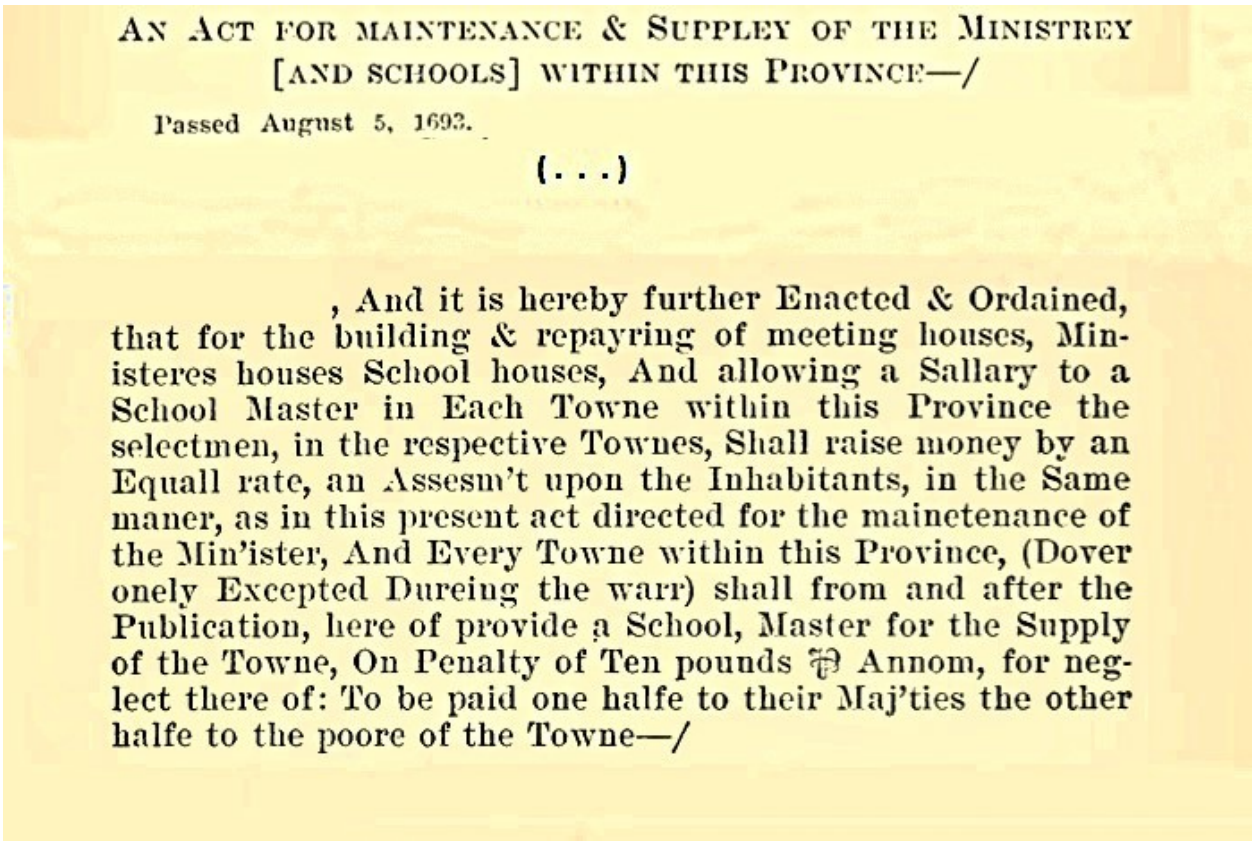


"When, in 1647, the Massachusetts General Court passed a law requiring any town with more than 50 families to teach its children reading and writing, this forward thinking town of Hampton was the first in New Hampshire to comply. Remember that in 1647, our neighbor to the south still held claim to our great state. The first Centre School was built in 1649 and opened on May 31 of that same year. The first teacher was a man by the name of John Legat, who had lived in the area since 1640. His job description read 'to teach and instruct all the children of or belonging to our Towne, both mayle and femaile, which are capable of learning to write and read and cast accounts.'

Casting accounts must mean arithmetic. Once a week he taught the students Orthodox catechism that, in this case, meant Puritan Calvinism. You can safely assume they recited the Lord's Prayer each morning, too. Unfortunately, the selectmen of Hampton fell behind on his salary payments, which amounted to quarterly allotments of corn, or cattle or butter of value equivalent to 5 pounds sterling. Teacher Legat was forced to sue selectmen Anthony Stanian and Robert Tuck to recover his wages. Eventually the parties settled out of court."

(account by Jeff Cooper taken from the website of the Lane Memorial Library in Hampton, N.H.)

As already mentioned, King Charles II separated New Hampshire from Massachusetts in 1679. Over the following decades, the Province of New Hampshire enacted its own educational policies, which were similar to those that had been established in Massachusetts. For example, the **1693 "Act for Maintenance and Suppley of the Ministrey (and Schools) Within this Province"** required towns to raise money for the building and maintenance of school houses, with a ten pound penalty for non-compliance, half of which was to go to the British Crown and the other half "to the poore of the towne."



AN ACT FOR MAINTENANCE & SUPPLEY OF THE MINISTREY [AND SCHOOLS] WITHIN THIS PROVINCE—/

Passed August 5, 1693.

(. . .)

, And it is hereby further Enacted & Ordained, that for the building & repayring of meeting houses, Ministeres houses School houses, And allowing a Sallary to a School Master in Each Towne within this Province the selectmen, in the respective Townes, Shall raise money by an Equall rate, an Assesm't upon the Inhabitants, in the Same maner, as in this present act directed for the mainetenance of the Min'ister, And Every Towne within this Province, (Dover onely Excepted Dureing the warr) shall from and after the Publication, here of provide a School, Master for the Supply of the Towne, On Penalty of Ten pounds ℔ Annom, for neglect there of: To be paid one halfe to their Maj'ties the other halfe to the poore of the Towne—/

Fifteen years later, legislation establishing the first Latin (or "grammar") school in the Province of New Hampshire, in Portsmouth, was passed. The **1708 Act for a Free School to Be Kept at Portsmouth** also specified how much the schoolmaster would earn, and how much each of "the Severall Towns within this Province" would have to contribute. Unpaid dues were to be taken out of the personal assets of the selectmen of the delinquent towns.

AN ACT FOR A FREE SCHOOL TO BEE KEPT AT PORTSM°

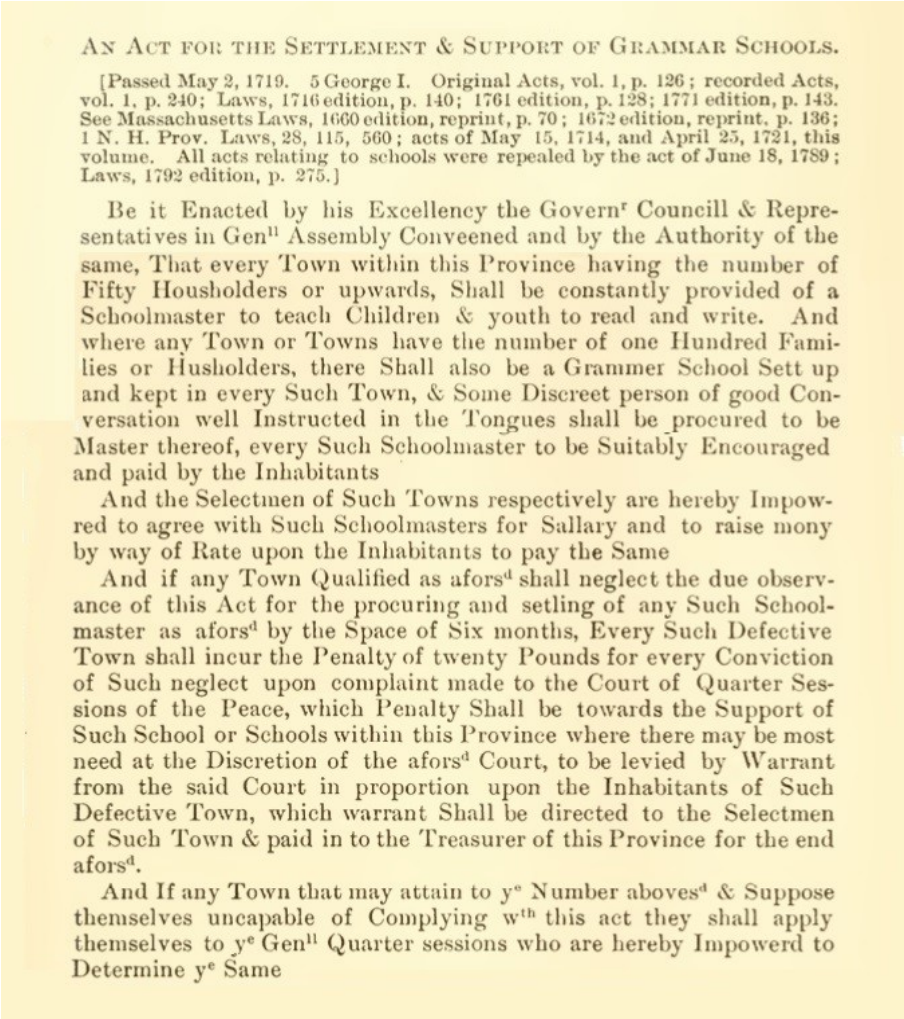
[Passed May 10, 1708. 7 Anne. Original Acts, vol. 1, p. 65; recorded Acts, vol. A, p. 199; 3 Province Papers, 365; extended by act of May 8, 1710.]

Whereas there is noe Latin School as yett Established in any Town in this Province, for the Encouragement of Learning and Vertue.

Bee itt therefore Enacted by his Excellency the Governour Councill and Representatives conven[d] in Generall Assembly, and by y[e] authority of y[e] Same, that a Latin school bee kept att Portsm° in y[e] said Province, & that the Schoolmaster from time to time bee appointed by his Excellency, Councill and Settled ministers of the Town and that the said School master bee payd by y[e] Severall Towns within this Province the Sum of fifty pounds money, ℔ annum, besides what y[e] Select men of Portsm° shall order to be pd by Each of there Inhabitants that Send their children to learn latin, and to bee a free School for writers, Readers and Latinists & the several sums to bee pd by Each Town are as follows Viz[t] Portsm° twenty Eight pounds, Hampton Eight pounds, Dover six pounds, Exeter six pounds, and Newcastle Two pounds, and that this act continue too years and that the Select men in Every Town within y[e] Province make assessm[t] on there Inhabitants for Each of there proportions, as aforesaid, to bee Collected and payd unto the said Schoolmaster Yearly by y[e] first day of March; / and if y[e] Select men in Each Town or any of them shall fail of making such assessm[ts] itt shalbe lawfull for any two Jus[ts] of the Peace in this Province to issue forth a warrant or warrants, directed to y[e] Sheriff to Levy on any of y[e] said Select men or there Estates for any such sum not payd according to time, & pay the same to the school master from year to year.

Eventually, New Hampshire enacted its own version of "The Old Deluder Satan Act," the **1719 Act for the Settlement and Support of Grammar Schools**. Its key provisions were as follows:

- Towns with fifty householders were to be "constantly provided of a Schoolmaster to teach Children & youth to read and write."
- Furthermore, "where any Town or Towns have the number of one Hundred Families or Husholders, there Shall also be a Grammar School Sett up and kept" to be taught by "Some Discreet person of good Conversation well instructed in the Tongues… Suitably Encouraged and paid by the Inhabitants."
- Failure to comply would result in a twenty pound fine, also drawn from the selectmen of the offending towns.



AN ACT FOR THE SETTLEMENT & SUPPORT OF GRAMMAR SCHOOLS.

[Passed May 2, 1719. 5 George I. Original Acts, vol. 1, p. 126; recorded Acts, vol. 1, p. 240; Laws, 1716 edition, p. 140; 1761 edition, p. 128; 1771 edition, p. 143. See Massachusetts Laws, 1660 edition, reprint, p. 70; 1672 edition, reprint, p. 136; 1 N. H. Prov. Laws, 28, 115, 560; acts of May 15, 1714, and April 25, 1721, this volume. All acts relating to schools were repealed by the act of June 18, 1789; Laws, 1792 edition, p. 275.]

Be it Enacted by his Excellency the Governr Councill & Representatives in Genll Assembly Conveened and by the Authority of the same, That every Town within this Province having the number of Fifty Housholders or upwards, Shall be constantly provided of a Schoolmaster to teach Children & youth to read and write. And where any Town or Towns have the number of one Hundred Families or Husholders, there Shall also be a Grammer School Sett up and kept in every Such Town, & Some Discreet person of good Conversation well Instructed in the Tongues shall be procured to be Master thereof, every Such Schoolmaster to be Suitably Encouraged and paid by the Inhabitants

And the Selectmen of Such Towns respectively are hereby Impowred to agree with Such Schoolmasters for Sallary and to raise mony by way of Rate upon the Inhabitants to pay the Same

And if any Town Qualified as aforsd shall neglect the due observance of this Act for the procuring and setling of any Such Schoolmaster as aforsd by the Space of Six months, Every Such Defective Town shall incur the Penalty of twenty Pounds for every Conviction of Such neglect upon complaint made to the Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace, which Penalty Shall be towards the Support of Such School or Schools within this Province where there may be most need at the Discretion of the aforsd Court, to be levied by Warrant from the said Court in proportion upon the Inhabitants of Such Defective Town, which warrant Shall be directed to the Selectmen of Such Town & paid in to the Treasurer of this Province for the end aforsd.

And If any Town that may attain to ye Number abovesd & Suppose themselves uncapable of Complying wth this act they shall apply themselves to ye Genll Quarter sessions who are hereby Impowerd to Determine ye Same

Reality Check: How Aware of the Education Laws were the Towns? How Closely did they Hew to Them?

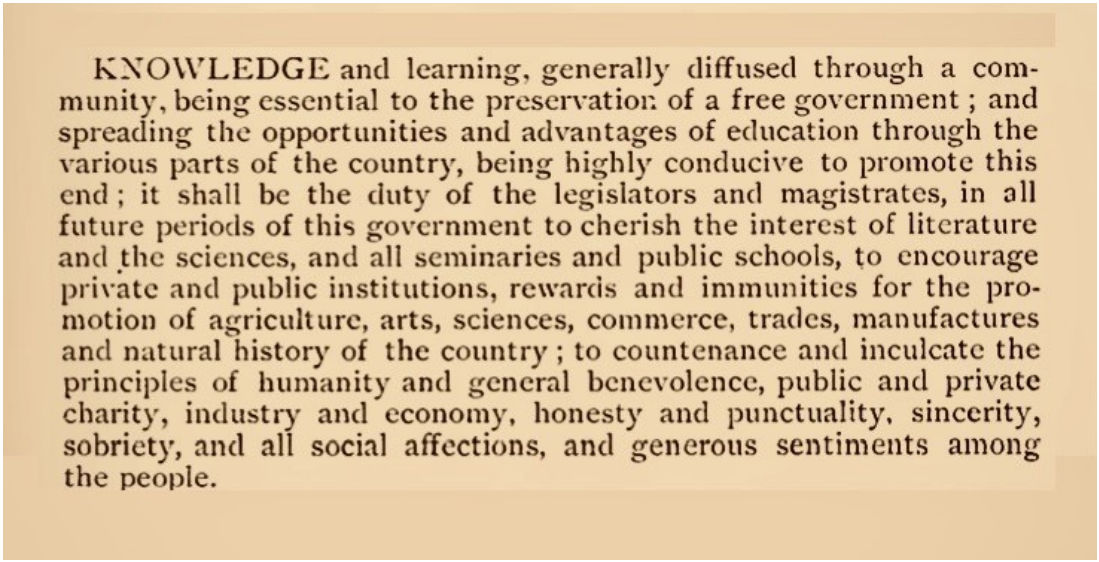
- "The promoting of learning very obviously calls for Legislative Care. The insufficiency of our present Laws for this purpose must be too evident, seeing nine tenths of your towns are wholly without Schools, or have such vagrant Masters as are much worse than none: Being for the most part unknown in their principles & deplorably illiterate."
  (Governor John Wentworth, message to the General Court, December 14, 1771)

- "The general neglect of grammar schools which were required to be kept in every town of 100 families, (led to the founding of private academies)."
  (N. Bouton. A History of Education in New Hampshire, 1833, 25)

- When New Hampshire became a province, the Massachusetts act of 1647 "was copied upon our statute books and constituted the statute law, with slight changes, for one hundred years. It is not probable that the law of 1647 was generally enforced."
  (Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, New Hampshire, 1876, 297)

- Before 1827, "there were but few and imperfect statutes" and as a result, a town school system "was established without the regulation and compulsory influence of law."
  (W. H. Child. History of Cornish, New Hampshire, Vol. 1, 1911, 143)

One year after the conclusion of the War of Independence, **Part 2, Article 83** of the newly ratified **1784 New Hampshire State Constitution** instructed "legislators and magistrates, in all future periods of this government to cherish the interest of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries and public schools."



KNOWLEDGE and learning, generally diffused through a community, being essential to the preservation of a free government; and spreading the opportunities and advantages of education through the various parts of the country, being highly conducive to promote this end; it shall be the duty of the legislators and magistrates, in all future periods of this government to cherish the interest of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries and public schools, to encourage private and public institutions, rewards and immunities for the promotion of agriculture, arts, sciences, commerce, trades, manufactures and natural history of the country; to countenance and inculcate the principles of humanity and general benevolence, public and private charity, industry and economy, honesty and punctuality, sincerity, sobriety, and all social affections, and generous sentiments among the people.

One might well wonder what the writers meant by "cherishing" the schools. As Hall writes, "This question has been debated and old dictionaries have been consulted. For example, in the 1792 edition of the Dictionary of the English Language by Samuel Johnson, one finds this definition: 'to support; to shelter; to nurse up.'"

Initially, the pre-existing provincial legislation regarding education remained unchanged in the new State of New Hampshire (except that fines no longer went to the King of England). However, that changed with the passage of the **1789 "Act for the Better Regulation of Schools within the State; and for Repealing the Laws Now in Force Respecting Them."** Its key provisions were as follows:

- all of the carried-over colonial laws regarding schools were repealed
- arithmetic became a required subject matter alongside reading and writing
- additionally, shire towns (county seats such as Haverill in Grafton, or Newport in current-day Sullivan) and half shires (where there are two county seats, for example Keene and Charlestown in early Cheshire – which then incorporated what is now Sullivan county) also had to teach Greek and Latin in grammar school
- the state legislature was to set the exact amount that each town must raise for the support of schools,

but the towns would still determine how that money was spent

- teachers had to be certified in one of several specified ways
- the fine for failure to comply was equal to the amount that had been required to be raised, and was to be taken out of the selectmen's own holdings and assets

State of
New Hampshire.

AN ACT FOR THE BETTER REGULATION OF SCHOOLS WITHIN THIS STATE; AND FOR REPEALING THE LAWS NOW IN FORCE RESPECTING THEM.

[Passed June 18, 1789. Original Acts, vol. 11, p. 101; recorded Acts, vol. 6, p. 27. Laws, 1792 ed., p. 275. See additional act of December 10, 1791. Repealed June 15, 1799. See Robinson, "History of Taxation in New Hampshire," p. 177.]

Whereas the Laws respecting Schools have been found not to answer the important end for which they were made; Therefore—

Be it enacted, by the Senate and House of Representatives, in general Court convened, that all the laws of this State respecting Schools be, and they hereby are, repealed.

And be it further enacted, that the Select men of the Several towns & Parishes within this State be, and they hereby are, impowered and required to assess annually the Inhabitants of their respective towns, according to their polls and ratable estates, in a sum to be computed at the rate of five pounds for every twenty shillings of their proportion for public taxes for the time being and so for a greater or lesser sum. Which sums, when collected, shall be applyed to the sole purpose of keeping an English Grammar School or Schools for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, within the towns and parishes for which the same shall be assessed; except said town be a Shire or half shire town: in which case, the School by them kept shall be a grammer School for the purpose of teaching the latin and greek languages, as well as reading, writing and arithmetic as aforesaid.

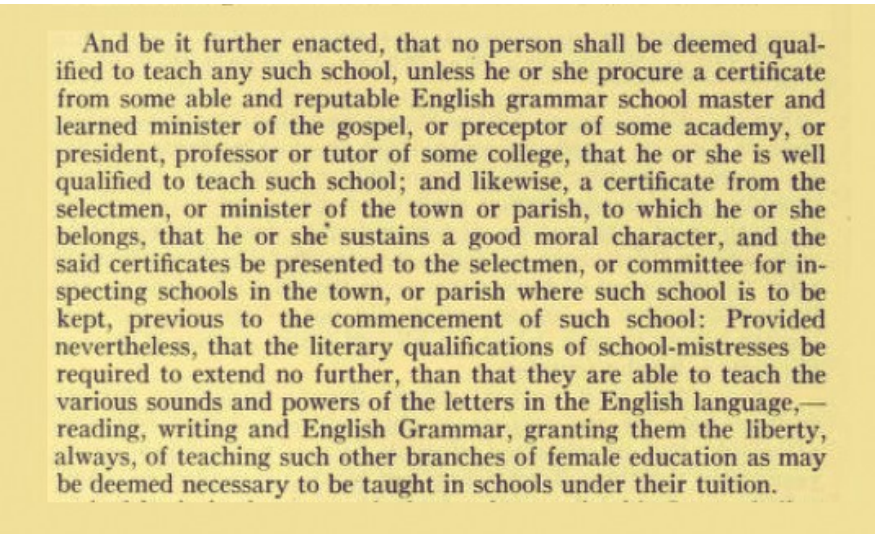
And be it further enacted, that no person shall be deemed qualified to keep any such School, unless he produce a certificate from some able and reputable School master, & learned Minister, or Preceptor of some Academy or President of some College; that he is well qualified to keep such school.

And be it further enacted, that if the Selectmen of any town or parish neglect to raise and appropriate, for the aforesaid purposes, the money required by this act to be by them assessed, collected and appropriated; such Select men shall forfeit and pay the full sum, which they shall be so found delinquent in assessing, seasonably collecting and duly appropriating. Which sum shall be recovered by bill, plaint or information in any court proper to try the same; and when recovered, shall be appropriated for the purpose of keeping a School in the town where such delinquency shall happen; which sum shall be paid out of the goods and estate of such Select men. And it shall be the duty of the Town Clerk for the time being of the respective towns or parishes to see that the sums recovered of such delinquent Select men be appropriated agreeably to the true intent and meaning of this Act—

Several education acts were approved by the state legislature during the early 18th century. These basically established and codified the "school district system" whereby New Hampshire towns divided into separate school districts, each with the ability to raise tax funds for school purposes. Among the more notable such laws were the following:

The **1805 Act Empowering School-districts to Build and Repair School houses and Regulating schools** divided each town into separate, self-funded school districts whose boundaries were defined by the town. Each was to be headed by a district committee, and was authorized to levy taxes on the estates within the district to fund the building, repair, or purchase of the schools as well as the purchase of "the necessary utensils for the same." Each district was to elect a clerk to keep a record of all votes passed in the district.

The **1808 Act for the Better Regulation of Schools, and for Repealing Certain Laws now in Force Respecting the Same** required each town to appoint a committee of three or more people charged with the annual inspection of all the schools, authorized the school districts to purchase school lots of not more than a quarter acre, and specified the professional and moral qualifications for teachers (as shown below):

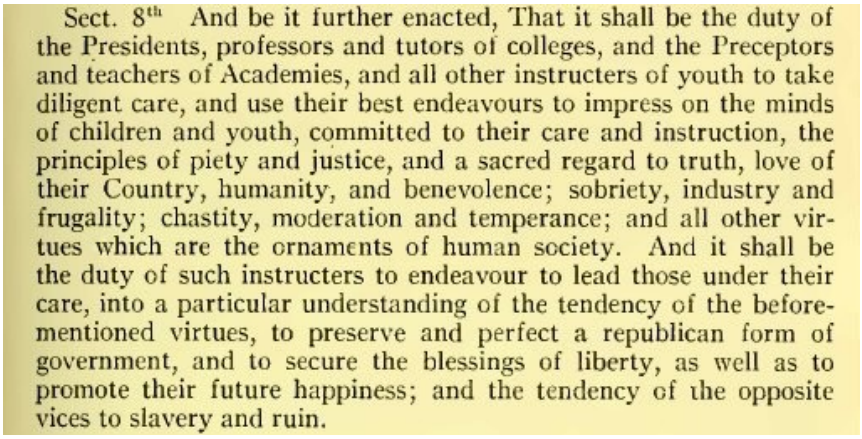


And be it further enacted, that no person shall be deemed qualified to teach any such school, unless he or she procure a certificate from some able and reputable English grammar school master and learned minister of the gospel, or preceptor of some academy, or president, professor or tutor of some college, that he or she is well qualified to teach such school; and likewise, a certificate from the selectmen, or minister of the town or parish, to which he or she belongs, that he or she sustains a good moral character, and the said certificates be presented to the selectmen, or committee for inspecting schools in the town, or parish where such school is to be kept, previous to the commencement of such school: Provided nevertheless, that the literary qualifications of school-mistresses be required to extend no further, than that they are able to teach the various sounds and powers of the letters in the English language,—reading, writing and English Grammar, granting them the liberty, always, of teaching such other branches of female education as may be deemed necessary to be taught in schools under their tuition.

The **1827 Act for the Support and Regulation of Primary Schools** was the most comprehensive of these laws:

- The law specified the amount that each town had to raise to support its schools, and the fine to be paid by the selectmen for non compliance.
- Each town was required to appoint a Superintending School Committee with three to five members whose duties included selecting the textbooks, inspecting the schools at least twice a year, examining the teachers, dismissing unfit teachers, and expelling unruly students. This committee would have overall legal control of the schools, and would produce a yearly written report for the Town Meetings. The committee members were to receive reasonable compensation for their work.
- Each school district in a town was to be supervised by a Prudential Committee consisting of a single person whose duties would include selecting the teachers for the district and providing for their board, furnishing the necessary fuel for the school, and reporting to the Superintending Committee.
- The law specified various requirements that teachers needed to meet. These included having US citizenship, obtaining a certificate from the Superintending Committee, and being a person of sober life and good moral character.

- The law also specified various educational goals, both of an academic nature (including teaching "the various sounds and powers of the letters in the English language, reading, writing, English grammar, arithmetick, geography, and such other branches of education as may be necessary to teach in an English school"), and of a civic and moral nature:



Sect. 8th And be it further enacted, That it shall be the duty of the Presidents, professors and tutors of colleges, and the Preceptors and teachers of Academies, and all other instructers of youth to take diligent care, and use their best endeavours to impress on the minds of children and youth, committed to their care and instruction, the principles of piety and justice, and a sacred regard to truth, love of their Country, humanity, and benevolence; sobriety, industry and frugality; chastity, moderation and temperance; and all other virtues which are the ornaments of human society. And it shall be the duty of such instructers to endeavour to lead those under their care, into a particular understanding of the tendency of the beforementioned virtues, to preserve and perfect a republican form of government, and to secure the blessings of liberty, as well as to promote their future happiness; and the tendency of the opposite vices to slavery and ruin.

Everett Stackpole, in his History of New Hampshire, holds that the school district system "greatly increased the number of schools and led to the building of school houses more conveniently situated" (p. 209). Similarly, H. E. Parker, in his chapter "Common School Instruction in the State" in Edwin Sanborn's History of New Hampshire, argues that "the effect of this system at the time was greatly to further the cause of education. By multiplying the centers of care and control with respect to schools it widened an acquaintance with all matters pertaining to public schools and deepened an interest in them… For seventy years this system has answered well the purposes of its establishment." However, Parker (who was writing in1875) then adds, "Not until of late years, as the centres of our population have changed, has it been felt that it could be superseded by something better" (348).

Stackpole (writing in 1916) and Garvin (writing in 2019) provide the reasons for Parker's remark. The former explains that "the population had increased in cities and villages, and decreased in rural districts, so that of the 2684 schools in the State, 804… numbered twelve pupils or less, and 307 schools averaged six or less" (214-215). The latter states that the school district system had functioned well enough "during the period of rural New Hampshire's increasing prosperity and population growth in the first half of the nineteenth century, but became increasingly unworkable during the age of farm abandonment and rural depopulation following the Civil War… (This) caused a catastrophic loss of tax revenue and impoverished many sparsely populated school districts, greatly reducing the quality of education in these areas" (61).

And so, the **1885 Act in Amendment of Chapter 86 of the General Laws, Relating to Schools, and to Establish the Town System of Schools** abolished the district system and re-established the town system; "Each town shall hereafter constitute a single district for school purposes." All of a town's schools were to come under the supervision of a single town School Board of three members serving staggered three year terms. The School Boards would provide schools "at such places and times as in their judgment shall best subserve the interests of education, and as shall give all the scholars of the town as nearly equal advantages as may be practical." Significantly, towns were permitted to spend up to 25% of their school money for transporting "scholars" (students) to and from the schools.

Subsequent New Hampshire education legislation through the mid-twentieth century largely focused on systematizing the running of the public schools. For example, the **1919 Act in Amendment of the Laws Relating to the Public Schools and Establishing a State Board** and the **1921 Act to Revise and Codify the School Laws of the State** spelled out at great length the rules governing the administration, funding, and curriculum of the schools, as well as teacher training, and much more, and also established a State Board of Education tasked with "the management and supervision of all public schools." However, in practice, funding remained (to this day) a predominantly local affair: "As a result of the 1919 legislation, the state of New Hampshire's share of funding to school districts rose from about seven percent to 12 percent with the bulk of the funding being in the form of a foundation aid program that was targeted to aid the poorest districts. After a year or two, the aid level dropped to about five percent and, except for one-year after WWII, never rose higher than five percent through 1998" (A.Volinsky, 2024).

Perhaps the law which most affected the town school system at the local level was the **1899 Act to Equalize the School Privileges of the Cities and Towns of the State** which gave towns permission to form combined supervisory districts. In other words, two or more towns could jointly employ a common superintendent, and share the expenses thereof. As Eastman Rawson describes, in 1918 Cornish approved forming a Supervisory Union with Plainfield and Croydon. In the nineteen thirties and forties, a larger union was established with Unity, Charlestown, Acworth, Langdon, and later with Goshen, Croydon and Lempster too.

This concludes the overview of the history and legislation of the New Hampshire public schools from their beginnings through the first half of the 20th century.

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